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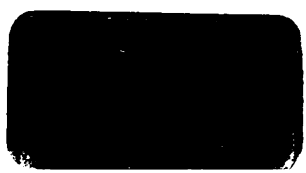
THE WONDERFUL ROMANCE

PIERRE DE COULEVAIN



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THE WONDERFUL ROMANCE

BY

PIERRE DE COULEVAIN

Author of "On the Branch," "The Heart of Life," "The Unknown Isle," etc.

Translated by

ALYS HALLARD

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TO AMERICA

COUNTRY OF NEW THOUGHTS

PIERRE DE COULEVAIN

PREFACE

The Wonderful Romance! It certainly is not mine. It is not even one of those that the human brain produces. It is the romance which the divine Powers are elaborating in the depths of the Infinite. It is that romance which we are all living, from morning to night and from night to morning; the one in which we are the heroes and the martyrs. It is the romance of this Earth of ours.

My latest volume was only just finished, when the literary cells of my brain set to work once more. They took up, for the fourth time, a novel planned out after the birth of *Eve Triumphant*. The individuals, manufactured with features and impressions stored up in my brain in the most mysterious way, appeared once more upon the screen. There was a woman's face, a beautiful, young face of which I had once caught a glimpse, with a ray of sunshine falling on it. Then there was the face of a man of the world, one of the last scions of an old race, a man of some 45 years of age. He was dark, his hair was just turning grey, the pupils of his eyes were very light, he was clean shaven and his mouth had an ironical, bad expression, the expression of a conqueror who knows all the bitterness of victory. There was the face, too, of a working-man, with the savage expression of Holbein's Christ and then the face of a girl of sorrows.

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All these outlines became so vivid and life-like that it seemed as though they must actually take form. I found harmonious names for them. I made them act scenes which either amused me or moved me to pity. This creative work, which is God's work, gave me intense pleasure and, for several months, I simply revelled in it. I then began to feel disgusted with all these imaginary stories which only depicted the struggle of love.

I had commenced reading the *Wonderful Romance* whilst searching for *The Heart of Life*, and this had roused in me a curiosity which wanted to be satisfied. It had given me an absolute need of truth and of reality. Reality is a fruit which Humanity has not yet succeeded in opening. Its shell is hard, its pulp bitter, but each of its vermillion seeds contains a mystery, a surprise, a germ, a divine spark. I have caught a glimpse of the beautiful shade of its paradises, of the rays of hope which light up its purgatories and of the gleams of dawn which brighten its hells. Its depths and its mysteries attract me irresistibly. The splendour of its brilliant light chased away my poor little ideal figures. They will appear again some day, I have no doubt. They will never die, for they are Thought. I shall take them away with me to the Beyond and Nature will perhaps do something with them.

Now that my vision has become more objective, I want to have one last look at Life. There is something both pathetic and droll in the idea of a human creature coming out of himself and lifting himself up from earth, as it were, in order to contemplate the divine work,

thus becoming a spectator of the piece in which he is playing a very small part!

I have been blamed for having put my own personality too frequently on the scene. I have done this unconsciously hitherto, but I shall now do it consciously, whenever it seems necessary and, what is still more, I shall not make any excuses for this, as my illustrious predecessors have done. In the first place, a sense of dignity would prevent me, and then my horror of all that is false and conventional. It was a poor sort of psychologist who said that: "No man is great in the eyes of his valet." It seems to me, on the contrary, that no man is great, *except* to his valet. The valet of a Pope or of a King thinks himself very superior to his colleagues who only have ordinary mortals for masters, and he will put on grand airs for the simplest services that he has to render to His Holiness, or to His Majesty. I have not seen this myself, of course, but I am sure of it, on account of the curious aberration which causes illusion. It is possible, then, to be great in the eyes of one's valet, but to be great in one's own eyes is more difficult, and to the thinker it is impossible. Writers and men of science know all the efforts and gropings that their master-pieces represent. The very saints must have known the seamy side of their own sanctity, and every individual is more or less conscious, at certain moments, of his own inferiority. I have had my share of vanity. I can never have any more, though, now, and God alone knows how much I regret this! Thanks to my age, I now find myself on the boundary line of two worlds. My impressions on leaving the one world

and my intuitions with regard to the Beyond may, thanks to their *absolute sincerity*, have some scientific value. I shall therefore give them without any scruple. Wrongly or rightly, I firmly believe that I have been gradually prepared from a long time back, for the reading of the *Wonderful Romance*. I even believe that I was created solely for this, and, if it be a privilege, I have certainly paid dearly for it.

Up to the present, I have only hovered round the great questions of life. This time I intend to attack them frankly. I do not pretend to be able to solve one single question, but I feel that I can examine many in all justice, and with an open mind, and that is something.

Only those readers who have been brought into the same current of thought will understand me. It will only be a small number, I fancy, but that does not matter. Evolution will make majorities of certain minorities, and there are majorities that are destined to become minorities. Such majorities do not count.

And so I am compelled to go on a fresh cruise to the *Heart of Life*. How long will it last? Perhaps one year, perhaps two years. Where will it take me and how shall I be helped? I am curious to know all this. I wonder whether my motor contains sufficient spirit for a fresh flight. I do not know and I shall not trouble about that. If the flight should be *necessary, I shall accomplish it, as I am no longer working for myself.*

When Dr. Charcot set out for the South Pole, he called his boat *The Why Not?* I shall call my little barque *The Why*. My icebergs will be formidable ac-

cumulations of childish beliefs, prejudices and wrong ideas. I shall not attempt to destroy them, as they, too, are things of beauty, but I shall endeavour to make a passage for myself right through them, a passage which will take me to the open sea. At present they block the way to this. I am setting out with scanty provisions, but not without a compass. Let those who care for me come with me! If, during this cruise in search of the truth, I am not able to interest them, to touch their hearts, to bring to their eyes pleasant tears, to provoke their gaiety, and tickle their sense of humour, if I do not succeed in turning their thoughts and their adoration towards the Author of the divine manuscript, they have only to leave me. It is quite simple!

THE WONDERFUL ROMANCE

THE WONDERFUL ROMANCE

CHAPTER I

Sache donc cette triste et rassurante chose
Que nul, Coq du matin ou Rossignol du soir,
N'a tout à fait le chant qu'il rêverait d'avoir.

EDMOND ROSTAND.

LAUSANNE.

SOME twenty years ago, when driving through a little English town one Sunday, I saw a crowd of people gathered round a kind of easel, on which was placed a sheet of cardboard with a charcoal drawing of a huge eye. Underneath was written: "Thy eye must be born again." One of those dissenting ministers, who look like big, half-starved birds, was explaining the words of the Evangel. Thanks to his voice, there was a church-like silence in the street, which was disturbed for a few seconds by the wheels of my carriage. To a foreigner, the scene was both curious and comic. On arriving at the house of my friends, I did not fail to tell them about it, and I joked them in a pitiless way, and very tactlessly, on their religious excentricities. At present, I am rather inclined to believe that this *naîf* drawing was placed there for me too. It photographed itself on my mind and it has, perhaps, been doing an

occult work there which has helped in the preparation of this volume. Yes, our eye must be born again and, after being subjective, it must become objective. This new birth, for which philosophy and science are working unawares, marks the moment when humanity leaves its childhood behind it. The miracle, illustrated by the huge charcoal eye, has been accomplished, as far as I am concerned. During three quarters of my existence, I was both blind and deaf, like the majority of human beings, but I was never dumb. I looked without seeing, and I heard without understanding. I was born without what is known as faith. The legend of the Garden of Eden, which was told to me, as it is to all the fresh comers in this world, was only one more fairy-story to add to those with which my brain was already crammed. I vouch for the truth of this first impression of mine. Later on, the catechism roused the most curious and sincere incredulity in me. It was the dogma of hell that made me distrustful. I refused to believe that God, who told men to forgive times without number, could, Himself, doom them to eternal suffering. That seemed to me most unlikely. The fact that humanity had been kept waiting so long, four thousand years, for its redemption, caused my common sense and my instinct of justice to rebel.

"You must be mistaken, all of you," I began to say; "things were never arranged like that." This remark, which I was constantly repeating, was the despair of my very religious mother. I kept repeating it, with sincere conviction, but also in wicked delight, because I saw that it took effect. I regret my childish perver-

sity now and am ashamed of it. At the age of twelve, between two mad games of rounders, I used to wonder how things had really come about? I wanted to find out from a spirit of pure wilfulness, hoping to confound the "grown-ups" with my arguments, as I had a secret aversion for the "grown-ups." I did not really, at heart, care about the truth or the justice of things, and yet I have been in search of them all my life, probably in obedience to that force which I call "the other one." I have been in search of them — and it is they who have found me, conquered me and made of me their servant. When I first came into contact with suffering, with moral ugliness, all the "Whys and Wherefores" that have ever come to the lips of humanity came to mine — and nothing answered me, or at any rate, I could not hear or understand anything. I was holding the Wonderful Romance upside down; it was turned towards me on the subjective side, and I could not make it out. I saw Life in *myself* alone, according to my own state of mind and even of body. I thought it very fine, and even splendid, when I was happy, but abominable when everything was not going according to my wishes. If I were disappointed, I considered that all humanity was vile and unworthy. My unyieldingness and my intolerance, towards those who did not think as I did, were simply ridiculous. I saw Life as it appears through legends, old women's tales, dogmas, prejudices and conventionalities. My vision was bounded on the north, south, east and west by my own infinitesimal personality and it did not allow me to be just either towards Providence, or towards my fel-

low-creatures. Giordano Bruno, the philosopher of Nola, said: "Religion is the shadow of truth, but it is not contrary to truth." That was a wonderful intuition of his. This shadow of truth, which had remained with me, troubled me. God, made man (made man, in reality, by Christianism), had never inspired me with love or with awe, but my soul had retained the hereditary impress of that symbolical conception which has made so many atheists. This did not prevent me from seeing and feeling the Eternal God, the living God, the God whom Leonardo da Vinci called "*nostro primo motore*," our first motive power. Nature seemed to me to be outside of myself, it seemed to me even to be something hostile. I was like a poor bee, shut up under a glass shade, which rushes towards the blue sky, buzzing in despair, and hurts itself against the transparent wall. The day came when I found the way out, toward the Infinite, opened for me. In every conversion, there is always a never-to-be-forgotten moment, the one when the points are changed and Providence puts us on to a new line. The points were changed for me and I am going to tell how this happened. The story is rather long, perhaps, but this accumulation of incidents will show the profoundness of the Divine work and will give an example of the thousands and thousands of episodes which go to compose the Wonderful Romance.

Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, when staying at Cannes, I made the acquaintance of Baroness d'O——, the widow of a Russian who had held an important post under government. She was about thirty years of age, with that original, Slavonic kind of ugliness, which is

often more fascinating than beauty. She was extremely slender and supple, and was very distinguished looking in her long black dresses, trimmed with crape. From the very first, her little green-blue eyes sought mine, and before very long she spoke to me. She had a little suite of rooms on the ground-floor and her drawing-room opened on to a flower-garden. She invited me to call on her and I went. She gave me tea, such as I have never tasted before or since. It was of the kind which is rarely to be procured outside China. A mandarin had given it to her husband. It was the colour of amber and had the scent of orchids. Its action on the brain was as exhilarating as champagne. When the Baroness saw that I appreciated it like a true *connaisseur*, she frequently invited me to tea with her. We had some very pleasant chats around the hospitable samovar and before long my hostess became confidential.

Madame d'O—— belonged to an aristocratic, but poor, family. She had married a husband much older than herself. He was really quite old, but he had inspired her with very deep affection and she worshipped his memory. She was delicate and seemed to have very little vitality. She would spend a great part of her day on her sofa, reading, dreaming and smoking cigarettes. All things appealing to the heart or mind interested her and she was also an excellent musician. Her widow's pension allowed her the luxury of a carriage and she invited her friends, in turn, to drive with her.

After I had known her for some little time, I began to notice that she was getting very nervous and that

something seemed to be on her mind. One afternoon I was driving with her and, just as we were going along between two hedges in full blossom, she suddenly said:

"Do you know whom I am expecting this evening?"

"Not at all," I answered, smiling at the question.

"An adopted daughter," she said.

"Oh, you are not going to be foolish enough to take charge of a child?" I exclaimed, impulsively.

"It is almost an obligation, but I think I shall like this obligation," said Madame d'O——. "About eighteen months before my husband's death," she continued, "he was sent to China. I went with him and, as we were returning home again, there was a terrible storm and we were almost shipwrecked. My husband fell and broke his leg. The ship's doctor treated him very skilfully, and was most devoted. He was well remunerated, of course, but we discovered that this Dr. Linsky was the son of a poor Siberian priest, that he was separated from his wife and had two little girls. My husband wanted to adopt one of these children and we talked it over several times. He died before we had taken any steps in the matter. It remained for me to carry out his wishes. I wrote to Dr. Linsky, but only obtained his consent with great difficulty. He is to bring me the child this very evening."

"I can quite understand your anxiety then," I said, "for it is either happiness or misery that is on its way to you."

"Yes, either happiness or misery coming by express from the heart of Siberia. The father and daughter have been on their way for the last week. They are

travelling third class, so that I expect to see them arrive half dead, poor things!"

For the next three days the Baroness did not appear in the dining-room. On the fourth day she came up to call on me and I could see, from her radiant face, that she had not been disappointed. The child had made an excellent impression on her.

"She is ten years old," she said. "I should have preferred her being younger. I had seen the photographs of both children and asked to have the younger one, but the father had not remembered this and he has brought me the elder one. I took her on my lap and told her that I was going to be her mother and she replied, quite clearly: 'You cannot be my mother, as I have one. You could be my aunt or my friend, if you like.' She spoke as though she were conferring a favour on me."

"Her reply must have given you a good opinion of her character," I said, by way of consolation.

"Yes, but I had longed to be a mother, and now I must resign myself to being an aunt," said my visitor, with a sad smile. "This is one more disappointment in my life. I have left off counting them."

The following day I made the acquaintance of little Djénia. She was very tall for her age, straight and well built. I saw before me a vigorous human plant, a plant that had grown in the open air and in a Northern climate. Her light yellow hair was cut short and this made her look like a boy. Her complexion was like glistening snow and the expression of her light blue eyes was intelligent and grave. Her dilating nos-

trils seemed to want plenty of air and space. Her mouth indicated kindliness and decision. I was struck by her perfect ease. She gave the impression of having taken complete possession of this world, although she had only been in it ten years. It certainly was not an *insignificant* creature that had just come into the life of the Baroness.

Dr. Linsky was introduced to me and he looked to me like a veritable Cossack. His regular and somewhat heavy features were animated by grey-blue eyes, which were both dreamy and gentle. He was very tall and seemed to fill the little drawing-room. He spoke French with a certain difficulty and timidity. After a few minutes it appeared to me as though something were taking place in the ambient atmosphere. It seemed to me that I felt the presence of the great Invisible. I began to observe Djénia's father and my hostess. I saw nothing to justify the magnetic impression I had just had, but I said to myself that it was quite possible that this strength and this weakness should be irresistibly attracted to each other, without either of the two individuals being aware of it. However that may have been, Dr. Linsky left Cannes the following day.

The Baroness and I were both amazed at the way in which Djénia accepted her change of surroundings. From the time she was six years old she had been living in a very poor home, a house built of wood, which must have been very little different from the houses of the peasants. She had now come to all the comfort and luxury of a first-class hotel, and yet she did not show

the slightest surprise. She asked for things from the servants and allowed them to wait on her, as though she had always been accustomed to being waited on. She handled her knife and fork and behaved at table as though she had been educated, from her earliest infancy, in an English nursery. A still more curious thing was the fact that the blue sky of Cannes, and all the flowers of a Riviera winter, neither excited her surprise nor her enthusiasm. When we talked to her about such things, she would answer in a pleasant, obliging way: "Yes, it is very beautiful, very beautiful indeed," but there was a far-away look in her eyes, as though she saw other things too, the snowy plain, the sombre forest and, perhaps, the *isba* of the poor priest, her grandfather. She owned that she missed the snow and the howling of the wolves and, during her play-time, she would go and slide on the marble floor of the hall in the hotel. She told her "aunt," with innocent pride, that she could climb the very highest trees, and she even offered to go out and give her a proof of her skill in that way. Madame d'O—— objected to this and told her jokingly that she must not climb like that, or people would think that little Russian girls were a species of the monkey tribe.

I made her a present of a doll. She had never dreamt of such a beautiful one and, for a second, she was perfectly speechless with surprise. She then held out her hands suddenly, grasped mine and gripped it in such a strong, expressive way that I was astonished. A child does not usually manifest its feelings in that way. The

hand-shake is the gesture of grown-up people and there are so few people who know how to shake hands. A few days later, I found Djénia playing with an old wooden doll that looked like an idol belonging to savages. The doll's bed was a basket full of rags of all colours. The child was slightly embarrassed when she saw me and then, turning to the Baroness, she said: "Please tell your friend that I like her beautiful doll very much indeed, but that I cannot give this one up, because she is Russian and she came with me from Russia." A week's journey, third-class, I thought to myself, was certainly not to be forgotten. I was deeply touched by the child's loyalty. Only the old soul of the Slavonic race, composed of so many different souls, is capable of such deep feeling from its earliest days.

Madame d'O—— at once began to educate her little savage. She gave her lessons in French and music and this took her out of herself, so that the lessons were most salutary. As time went on she was more and more delighted with the intelligence and the character of her adopted niece. At the end of a fortnight, Djénia, accompanied by her maid, could go out shopping and ask for things herself in French. Two months later, I was able to converse with her. I often wondered whether the fine maternal instinct would continue in the case of the Baroness d'O——. Adoptions of this kind often take place in Russia, but it frequently happens that such parents weary of their adopted child, or the responsibility becomes onerous. The child is then deserted, and the consequences are cruel. The figure of Dr. Linsky, whom I had seen in the background of this

little picture, somewhat reassured me with regard to Djénia's future fate.

For about six months after leaving Cannes, Mme. d'O—— and I kept up a correspondence. It then ceased and I must confess that in this, and similar experiences, the fault was mine.

Two years passed by and, one afternoon, a visiting card was brought to me with the name of Madame Linsky printed on it. In pencil some one had written, Baroness d'O——.

"Married and done for!" I said to myself, rather vulgarly.

It can very well be imagined with what pleasure and curiosity I received my unexpected visitor! She had changed so much that I should have hesitated before acknowledging her, if I had met her in the street. She was no longer the interesting widow garbed in sweeping dresses trimmed with crape, but a very simple looking woman, wearing a tailor costume and a toque. The toque had not come from a first-class milliner, but underneath it was a face which indicated health and happiness.

"You see, I have changed my name," she said, blushing slightly.

"I expected you would," I answered, smiling.

"You expected I should! But when you were at Cannes, I never thought of this change."

"Quite possible," I said; "but Nature was thinking of it for you."

"Had you really guessed it?" asked Madame Linsky, her small eyes big with surprise.

"Yes — and I hope you are happy?"

"Oh, so happy!" she replied. "I am no longer ill at all, would you believe it?"

"Why, of course," I said, rather tantalisingly. "And what about Djénia?"

"Djénia is a good girl and very satisfactory. I have succeeded in getting the other sister, too, so that they have the same advantages as each other."

Seated there by my table where, a year later, I was to weave a romance, Madame Linsky told me hers, a romance written by the gods. She told me all the obstacles she had had to surmount. Her family had objected to her marriage and Dr. Linsky's wife had refused to have a divorce. Then, too, there had been the terrible question of money.

"It is thanks to the forethought of my husband that things have come all right," said Madame Linsky. "The night before he died he had made one of his friends promise to try to make everything easy for me, in case I should ever care for a poor man, so that I might have my share of happiness."

"Ah, I recognise Russian sentimentality there!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, and a very noble kind of sentimentality, too. My husband had always felt a certain remorse at having married so young a wife. His friend did not fail me. By marrying again, I lost my widow's pension, and this, of course, made everything impossible. This friend obtained permission for the half of my pension to be granted to me. I could, therefore, follow my inclination. The Government is sending Monsieur Lin-

sky on a three years' research mission to France, England, and Germany. We are now living in a furnished flat in the Boulevard St. Michel. The surroundings are poor, but not vulgar."

Madame Linsky invited me to tea with her. "It will not be the mandarin's tea," she said; "there is none left, but it will not be undrinkable."

On the day appointed I went to the Boulevard St. Michel. I was very curious to see the home of this Russian *grande dame*, in the very heart of the Latin Quarter. The house in which she was living was situated between two court-yards which looked fairly clean. The wooden staircase was uncarpeted, the balustrade was of iron, the walls white, and the window more or less dusty. The entrance was not precisely attractive. On reaching the second floor I rang the bell. A tall man, wearing a military coat, opened the door. In the semi-obscurity I thought, at first, that it was a man-servant, but fortunately I recognised Dr. Linsky. He showed me into the adjoining room, and his wife came forward with outstretched hands to welcome me. There were a few seconds of inevitable embarrassment, which the little girls helped to overcome. Djénia had grown very much, and was as straight as a young pine-tree. I looked at her face and saw that she was happy. Her eyes had an expression of gravity, like those of children who have witnessed sad things. Her younger sister was more refined looking and prettier, but she had less individuality. Both of them were very simply dressed, but there was a certain elegance about them. They were wearing very short dresses of dark blue

serge, with Russian blouses, black stockings and sandal slippers. A huge bow of black ribbon tied their plait of fair hair, and this bow revealed a maternal coquettishness which I was glad to see. Djénia prepared tea and served us with an ease and sureness rarely seen in a child of twelve. No, it certainly was not the mandarin's tea and there was no beautiful scenery as there had been at Cannes. The little Boulevard St. Michel drawing-room had two windows looking on to a court-yard. The embroidered white muslin curtains, the furniture covered with red velvet, and the wall paper were all particularly ugly, but there was an Oriental rug on the floor, there were embroidered stuffs and Russian weapons on the walls, artistic knick-knacks in all the corners, shelves laden with books, signs of intellectual work about and then, too, there were flowers.

The dining-room door was open, the samovar was singing on the table and a rich tea service gave a luxurious note to the commonplace poverty. All these things made the little flat seem cheerful and the rays of love gave a pleasant warmth to the whole atmosphere. Whilst the doctor was sipping his glass of tea, with its slices of lemon, I examined him. There was an element that was irremediably rustic about him, but he gave the impression of being a good sort of force. I could imagine him directing an ambulance, staunching wounds and *patching up* quantities of soldiers, but I could not fancy him caring for little aches and pains. Intellectually, he was superior to his wife, but by birth and education he had remained inferior. Unless I am mistaken, he is quite aware of this. To him, his wife will

always be Baroness d'O——. When he heard her telling me enthusiastically how much she enjoyed her new life, dining at the little Latin Quarter restaurants, going to the small theatres, mounting on the top of trams, he smiled at her, as though thanking her for showing that she was so happy.

When I rose to take leave of her, after staying a long time, Madame Linsky said to me, in the most natural way and with a perfectly convinced tone: "You see what a difference there is between the old days and the present! When you first knew me, I was so poor, and now, I am so rich!" She looked round at her wealth — her husband and her two adopted daughters. I wondered whether this were mere *literature*, as women of Slavonic race are apt to indulge in *literature* quite unconsciously. It seemed to me, though, that this was real honeymoon sentiment.

A fortnight later I left Paris, and from that day to this I have never had any news of the little family. This is another instance of my own negligence. I sometimes wonder whether Madame Linsky, after thirteen years of married life, still considers herself rich. However that may be, she was, without knowing it, the instrument of my conversion and of my progress. As I was going slowly downstairs after this visit, the cause of the transformation I had just seen came suddenly to my mind. I stopped short on one of the stairs, struck by that word *cause!* A storm in the China Sea and a broken leg! If it had not been for that accident, Djénia and her sister would never have left their native country. They would simply have vegetated there,

without any culture, and would probably have married some poor priest, like their own grandfather. A storm of wind in that far-off country was to affect two little unknown girls, who were living quiet lives in an out-of-the-way part of Siberia, and the effects of that storm would go on multiplying and continuing during several generations. I saw all this very vividly and was struck by it. Were we not free agents, I asked myself. Over and over again I asked myself this question and, when once I was in the carriage, driving back to my hotel, I began going back to the causes of things, thinking, with all my powers of thought, along the lines that had suddenly been opened out to me. The points had been turned for me.

I have not even yet discovered *how* things have been arranged, but I know that they are determined and ordered from their very beginnings by the divine powers which are the radio-activity of the Eternal God. I no longer see man, but the Terrestrian; our cities and our homes are to me merely the habitations of the Terrestrians, our planet is the work-field and the battle-field of higher beings, of the army of Heaven, of those forces that we call Providence and Nature. The life that I had lived with indifference, anger and indignation, seemed to unfold before me like a marvellous flower; like a passion-flower, it is true, with the instruments of crucifixion marked on its petals, but with the perfume, and the germ of immortality buried in its chalice. The turning-point will arrive for others, for all of us, just as it did for me. Humanity will see Life, and through

Life only will it learn to know, to adore and to worship its "first motive power."

Whilst I was writing this little romance about Madame Linsky, which had had such an influence on my thoughts, a parcel was brought to me from Princess C——, a charming Russian woman with whom I had played bridge a great deal. I was very much struck by the arrival of this little souvenir from Russia, just at the very moment when I was writing of the Russian soul. The parcel contained two little Easter offerings. The one was a porcelain dish representing three eggs and two cakes, one of which was surmounted by the symbolical rose and the other by the paschal lamb. The other object was suitable for a child. It was a little box, on the lid of which was a table of white wood, an earthenware jug and a red bowl. By the table was a Russian peasant woman, wearing a black and red checked skirt, a pink spotted apron and shoes made of the bark of a tree. A yellow silk handkerchief was tied under her chin. She had fair hair, a pinky white complexion and blue eyes. This peasant woman was strikingly like little Djénia. It might have been her mother, and Djénia would certainly have grown up looking like this, if it had not been for the fateful storm.

The coincidence of this little present coming, just as I was writing on this Russian subject, would have amused me formerly. At present such a thing touches me, for I think it was intended by the gods, for whom I am working. I believe it to be one of those encouragements which they give to their collaborators during any

extra efforts on the up-hill way. They know that I am going up-hill and that I shall have to climb much higher and with great difficulty. Was this coincidence any more extraordinary than the fact of the repercussion of that storm in the China Sea reaching me, a poor atom of the Infinite, and making me write this long chapter eighteen years later?

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Prompted by this idea, I began to go back to the causes of such events as had made, and as go on making, our history. I began to think of the causes which had brought about certain marriages and certain accidental deaths, of the causes of those tragical little events which some of the daily papers give in three lines, but which frequently contain, between those lines, whole volumes of human grief and suffering.

All these various incidents were due, I felt, not to chance and not to a blind fatality, but to a living, determining, *individual* thought, to a will-power coming from the Beyond, from the Great Beyond. The admirable weaving and the combining of circumstances revealed to me the work of a supreme Master, the work that poor romance writers endeavour, with more or less success, to copy, but always with less success rather than more.

To minds to which such things appeal, the searching for these causes is intensely interesting and astounding. One goes back, frequently, to a certain point and there, quite unexpectedly, one loses the thread. Then, suddenly, some little incident, or perhaps just a word, puts

the thread back into our hand. There is always a certain point beyond which our vision cannot penetrate, and when we come to this we are as furious and disappointed as a dog after losing its scent. On going back to the causes of things, one has a sensation of alarm at first, and one draws back as though at the edge of a precipice. If one has the courage to advance once more and to look down, one soon sees a little speck of light and the light becomes more clear and more brilliant, so that one is no longer afraid.

Oh, those first causes of our success, of our defeat, or of our vices! How far back they date and what insignificant things they appeared at the time — a glance, a word, a gesture, the insignificance of the proverbial orange peel.

I had always been very much surprised at a certain marriage, which had united two individuals who appeared to be absolutely unsuited to each other. They were of different race, of different religion and of different mentality. The other day I discovered that one of the ancestors of the husband had been instrumental in the conquest and civilisation of his wife's native country. It is in this way that the gods weave our destinies, and they select their agents without any consideration for our private affairs or for our feelings. It is the mother who, by her very love, prepares the unhappiness of her children. The father, thanks to his over-severity, drives his son to commit suicide. A brother plays at horses with his little sister, puts a slip knot round her throat and drives her round and round the table. He shouts to her and she gallops.

He pulls his rein and she falls down, strangled unintentionally by her own brother. A man introduces to his dearest friend the individual who, later on, is the cause of this friend's dishonour. A wife urges her beloved husband to take a certain train, in which he meets with his death. A man tells his chauffeur that he is in a hurry. The chauffeur endeavours to pass before the approaching train. He passes, but one of the wheels of the automobile is caught. The stronger force crushes the lesser one and the man, young and full of life, who, a few moments before, pronounced his own death warrant, is nothing but a lifeless form, covered with blood. His soul has been called away with rough brutality. It is the climax of divine irony that the creature frequently has to prepare his own ruin, his own destruction. And how assiduously he works to prepare this! For his worst enemy, or for his dearest friend, he could not do more.

It does not need much reflection to realise that these terrifying combinations are intentional, that they are elaborated by another will than ours. The refinement of cruelty of which they would be a proof make this very cruelty impossible. They are probably arranged in order to intensify and vary Life, and this intensity and variety are probably necessary for our progress. If Providence remorselessly, but probably not without pitying us, sends us along difficult and abominable paths, it is because Providence knows where such paths lead and is, perhaps, obliged to send us by them. Logically, with open-eyed faith, we can have all confidence.

Before my "renaissance" I happened to meet, at a

certain watering place, a woman whose nerves were in a pitiful state. She told me the reason of this. Her mother, when in the country with her two younger daughters, had commissioned this married sister to have the bedrooms of the two girls repapered, as a surprise before their return to town. Madame X—— chose a beautiful silver-grey paper, which was very expensive. It appeared that it was saturated with arsenic. It killed the two girls within six months and their father died of grief. Madame X—— could not forgive herself for having been the instrument of this horrible drama. When she told me the story, with all its heart-rending details, I declared, impulsively, that it was "infamous." At present, I should say to her: "Your mother, the manufacturer who composed this murderous formula, the salesman who showed you the roll of paper and recommended it, and you, who chose it, were all carrying out one of the plans of Providence. If this plan had not had the ultimate good of those whom it struck down, it would be monstrous and could not logically have been carried out." This idea, I fancy, would have consoled Madame X—— better than all the commonplace things which are uttered by humanity when certain trials confront us.

When searching for the causes of things, one soon learns to distinguish the grouping of individuals. This grouping is very curious to study. It has its mathematics, its geometry, its chemistry. We exclaim, in the most childish way, on meeting this or that person: "How small the world is!" It is not the world which is small, but the little circle in which we are evolving.

I have already said this, but there are some truths which we cannot repeat often enough.

It amused me to mark, by certain signs and lines, the appearance and reappearance, in my orbit, of the persons who had more or less affected it. Some of them returned at long, but regular, intervals; others at very irregular intervals; some have only crossed it like thunderbolts, causing the most disagreeable disturbances.

On going back to the causes of things, I have had glimpses of the absoluteness of our solidarity, not only with our fellow-creatures, but with the three kingdoms of Nature. The play of affinities, sympathies and antipathies, resulting from this solidarity, revealed to me something of the extent of our radiation.

When my vision became objective, I naturally saw things from a determinist's point of view and I began to read history once more. It had always bored me hitherto, as a book does which we do not understand. From the moment when I comprehended that it was the work of the gods, I was intensely interested and I began to search for their soul and for their plan. I began to look for the mechanism of Life. I saw nations born from a small group of individuals, I saw them gradually getting organised, describing curves with double branches, attaining to the very height of power and glory and then — descending again, but all of them in different ways. Some of them slipped downwards and were scarcely conscious that they were slipping. Others came down by leaps and bounds. I saw their evolution and then their annihilation, but this never took place until they had transmitted what was neces-

sary for the continuity of progress. I saw this geometrical figure in races, families and individuals, and I understood that it belonged to the plan of the Universe, and that if the Terrestrian lived it, he had certainly not planned it. Before very long I began to feel the existence of the psychical currents which make a spiritual atmosphere for us, of those currents which are more in number, and greater in strength, than those of the Ocean, currents which penetrate into our cells, bringing with them, in waves, the essence of Life, ideas, images, orders, which put us into communication with each other, with the whole Universe perhaps. And, on feeling myself so entirely in divine hands, I experienced the most delightful sensation of relief, and I longed to be able to communicate this to all my fellow-beings. A year after my "renaissance," the pen was put between my fingers, and I wrote a novel, in which I introduced creatures who were living out their destiny, but not making it. Very, very few people noticed the change of conception, but, for me, the whole interest of the book lay in this. I was destined to learn from this that the reader does not see with the author, unless he is almost in unison with him. And in the twentieth century, the majority of men, those who cannot think, believe that they are free! They are satisfied with looking at events, without going back to the causes. This is the reason of their constant illusion, an illusion which was no doubt intended. It was necessary, but it is most pathetic in its child-like presumption. These people are affected by all the elements, by the sun, the rain, by the shadow of a cloud. Their movements are con-

nected with the movements of millions of individuals that they do not see, that they do not know, and yet they consider themselves free! They live, threatened as they are by the forces overhead and by the forces under their feet, and still they believe that they are free! Religious people bend their backs under the ills which they have to bear; others put their backs up in disdain or utter blasphemies. Some remain entirely indifferent, but they all persist in believing themselves free! In spite of this, they repeat, like so many phonographs, the words: "Man moves and God leads him." This conciliates their reason and their pride. They admit that they are led. It would be more difficult not to see this than to see it, but they like to persuade themselves that their *movements* are free. They do not realise that these are caused by other *movements*, just as one wave is the result of another wave and that if their movements as atoms were free, they would determine the *action* of God. Is it possible to conceive of the Eternal God being directed by His own creatures?

Last week a writer, after analysing the genesis and development of certain political events, concluded his article with the words: "Is it possible that we are not free?" This was the very phrase I had pronounced as I stood on the stairs at Madame Linsky's. The acute anguish which I now heard in it made me start and then I exclaimed, joyfully: "At last!"

Ah, no, we are not free, and very fortunately for us! The earth and its sun are not free. The stars and the worlds are not free, neither are the Powers which gov-

ern them. The Eternal God, even, must be the slave of His own plan.

In their very heart I fancy that men must always have felt, more or less, that they were obeying unalterable laws. I fancy they have only been *pretending*, after the manner of children in their games, to believe in their own free will. For long centuries they have been hovering round the truth, and the very light from it has blinded them. By means of the quantities of discoveries that have been made, Providence has been preparing them to receive it, and the hour is now approaching when they will know that they are doing His work and not their own, and, with this certainty, whatever may be their task, they will do it joyfully and proudly.

In the eighteenth century, La Bruyère wrote this amusing phrase: "Everything has been said, as there have been men seven thousand years, and thinking men." Ah, no, everything had not been said. Among other things, the discovery had still to be made that the Earth and the Terrestrian were not created by a touch of the Divine wand, as the sacred poets fancied, but that they had been slowly and very laboriously developed, thanks to the action of innumerable forces. And everything has not been said even yet. We know scarcely anything of the mathematics, the geometry and the chemistry of our physical life, and next to nothing of the electricity which we have captured and which we handle like wasteful children. We know nothing of the psychical life; we do not even know the *real name*, nor the true function of what we call evil. And when we do know all

this, we shall still know comparatively nothing. All will not have been said, and all will never be said, either in this world or in the others, for it is the Eternal God who speaks.

Solomon, in spite of all his wisdom, wrote: "There is nothing new under the sun." And man, who has seen so much that was new, goes on repeating the childish phrase, because it is a pretty one and it sounds well, like all that is hollow. The great proverb-writer found nothing new and, with a harem like his, that is slightly discouraging for other men.

Nothing new under the sun! Has there not been something new continually, on our planet, from the very second when, all nebulous, it emerged from the depths of the Infinite, when the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters? Will there be nothing new in its last pulsation? Will its extinction be nothing new under the sun? And you were a wise man, oh, Solomon!

CHAPTER II

LAUSANNE.

I HAVE already said that books never come into our hands by chance, that they are "voices in space," the agents of the gods. Something fresh is constantly happening to make me more and more convinced of this.

Some three years ago, an open copy of *The Illustrated London News* on the table of the hotel reading-room attracted my attention. I took it up, thinking that the picture I saw represented a chrysanthemum exhibition. The picture made me start, for what I had taken to be chrysanthemums were a multitude of human heads. My mistake was not due to bad eyesight, as my sight is excellent, but to the close grouping of a crowd of Terrestrians, listening to a socialist Member of Parliament on Tower Hill. Half the crowd of men were facing and the other half had their backs turned to the photographer. They were all wearing caps, and these caps made their heads look round, like so many huge chrysanthemums. Whenever it happens that our apparent insignificance is thus brought to my notice, I feel a certain humiliation and anguish, and a kind of ridiculous dread lest we should ever be crushed out, as we so thoughtlessly or cruelly crush the ants with our feet. I went upstairs to my room in no enviable frame of mind.

Whilst resting, I picked up an American review, *The*

Century Magazine, quite mechanically, as I thought. On turning over its pages, I was surprised to find an article entitled "Sense and Sensibility," by Helen Keller. I have an immense admiration for this woman and I feel that I owe her a great deal. She had been deaf and blind from the age of nineteen months. In spite of this affliction, she had passed all the higher examinations, had learnt Greek, Latin, French and German, and had become a writer. I had read the story of her life, told by herself. In this article, "Sense and Sensibility," she told not only what she *saw*, felt and guessed, but how all this came about, for, as she herself said, she "only had three doors to her house." This article is a document which is quite unique. It reveals a prodigious effort of the human soul and, on that account, it certainly ought to have its place in this reading of life, on which I am engaged.

Helen Keller is an American from Alabama, one of the Southern States. The magazine gives several portraits of her. She is of medium height, looks about thirty-five years of age and is dressed with elegant simplicity. Her thick hair is drawn to the back of her head and coiled low in her neck, showing a little of her ears, her poor ears that have no resonance. Her eyelids are lowered over the sightless pupils. The shape of the forehead, the curve of the eyebrow and the *determined* nose all testify to intelligence and strong will; the cheeks, the rounded chin and the full lips give an impression of affection and kindness. The reflection of an inward smile lights up the lower part of the face. One of the portraits depicts her standing up, just in

front of her verandah, all gay with flowers. She is holding the bridle of her horse, King, and is evidently talking to him. Another portrait shows her at the foot of a tree, with her fingers on the bark, listening to the language of the sap. The tree is talking to her and her whole body is listening and — can understand. In another portrait, she is seated on the window-sill. Her left arm is thrown round a splendid little three-year-old child, " the little boy next door." The light has caught all the warmth of her caress, all the maternal feeling in this blind, deaf woman, and it is infinitely pathetic.

Helen Keller was six years old, when an admirable governess was providentially sent to her, a woman who had been blind herself and had been trained in the Perkins' Institution. She undertook to draw the poor child out of the darkness and silence in which she found her. She placed little Helen's fingers on her own lips, lips which spoke; she made her touch the various objects, spelt the names of these objects on the palm of her hand, and, in this way, put her into touch with a world which had hitherto been invisible and intangible to her. Helen Keller describes this wonderful initiation: —

" Before my teacher came to me, I did not know that *I am*. I lived in a world that was a no-world. . . . I did not know that I knew aught, or that I lived or acted or desired. I had neither will nor intellect. I was carried along to objects and acts by a certain blind, natural impetus. I had a mind which caused me to feel anger, satisfaction, desire. . . . I also recall tactually the fact that *never* in the start of the body, or a

heart-beat, *did I feel that I loved or cared for anything.* . . . I remember, also through touch, that I had a power of association. After repeatedly smelling rain and feeling the discomfort of wetness I acted like those about me: I ran to shut the window. When I wanted anything I liked, ice-cream, for instance, of which I was very fond, *I had a delicious taste on my tongue* (which, by the way, I never have now), and in my hand I felt the turning of the freezer. I made the sign, and my mother knew I wanted ice-cream. I thought and desired in my fingers. . . . I was not conscious of any change or process going on in my brain when my teacher began to instruct me. I merely felt keen delight in obtaining more easily what I wanted by means of the finger motions she taught me. . . . When I learnt the meaning of 'I' and of 'me' and found that I was something, I began to think. . . . Thought made me conscious of love, joy and all the emotions . . . and the blind impetus, which had before driven me hither and thither at the dictates of my sensations, vanished forever. I cannot represent more clearly than any one else the gradual and subtle changes *from first impressions to abstract ideas.* But I knew that my physical ideas, that is, ideas derived from material objects, appear to me first in ideas similar to those of touch. Instantaneously they pass into intellectual meanings. Afterwards the meaning finds expression in what is called 'inner speech.' When I was a child, my inner speech was *inner spelling.* Although I am even now frequently caught spelling to myself on my fingers, yet I talk to myself, too, with my lips, and it is true that

when I first learned to speak, my mind discarded the finger symbols and began to articulate. However, when I try to recall what some one has said to me, I am conscious of a hand spelling into mine. . . . Nature — the world that I could touch — was folded and filled within me. . . . I came later to look for an image of my emotions and sensations in others. I had to learn the outward signs of inward feelings. The start of fear, the suppressed, controlled tensity of pain, the beat of happy muscles in others, had to be perceived and compared with my own experience before I could trace them back to the intangible soul of another. . . ."

This admirably described initiation work takes place, undoubtedly, with all creatures, but they are not aware of it. The immense effort that it cost the little blind, deaf child made her conscious of it, and it was impossible for her to forget it.

In order that Helen Keller might know that she *was*, in order that she might be able to think and to love, she had to be put into communication with the currents of universal life, with her fellow-beings. Is not this the proof of our close solidarity?

The writer of the article, "Sense and Sensibility," affirms that for a blind, deaf child, night is "kindly." The child inherits something of the mind of its ancestors who had seen, and he is affected by the light that he has never seen, by the sounds that he has never heard. She adds: "Every atom of my body is a *vibroscope*. . . . Sometimes it seems as if the very substance of my flesh were so many eyes looking out at will upon a world new created every day. . . . I admit

that there are innumerable marvels in the visible universe unguessed by me. . . . There are myriad sensations perceived by me of which you do not dream. . . . Footsteps, I discover, very tactually according to the age, the sex and the manner of the walker. . . . I know when one kneels, kicks, sits down, or gets up. Thus I follow, to some extent, the actions of people about me and the changes of their postures. . . . There are tactual vibrations which do not belong to skin touch. They penetrate the skin, the nerves, the bones, like pain, heat, and cold. The beat of a drum smites me through from the chest to the shoulder-blades. . . . If vibration and motion combine in my touch for any length of time, the earth seems to run away while I stand still. . . . The loftier and grander vibrations which appeal to my emotions are varied and abundant. I listen with awe to the roll of the thunder and the muffled avalanche of sound when the sea flings itself upon the shore. . . . I should say that organ-music fills to an ecstasy the act of feeling. . . . I enjoy the music of the piano most when I touch the instrument. . . . I am able to follow the dominant spirit and mood of the music . . . but I have never succeeded in distinguishing one composition from another. . . . I am exceedingly sensitive to the harshness of noises like grinding, scraping, and the hoarse creak of rusty locks. . . . One day, in the dining-room of a hotel, a tactual dissonance arrested my attention. I found that two waiters were walking back and forth, but not with the same gait. A band was playing and I could feel the music waves along the floor. One of the waiters walked in time to

the band, graceful and light, while the other disregarded the music and rushed from table to table. . . . By placing my hand on a person's lips and throat, I gain an idea of many specific vibrations. . . . The utterances of animals, though wordless, are eloquent to me . . . the cat's purr, its mew . . . the dog's bow-wow of warning, or of joyous welcome, the snort of a horse. . . . With my own hand I have felt all these sounds. . . . The silence of the country is always most welcome after the din of the town. . . . The thousand voices of the earth have truly found their way to me, the silky swish of leaves, the buzz of insects. . . . Heat-waves and sound-waves play upon my face in infinite variety and combination. . . . The rain of winter is raw, without odour and dismal. The rain of spring is brisk, fragrant, charged with life-giving warmth. . . . *Between my experience and the experiences of others there is no gulf of mute space which I cannot bridge.* For I have endlessly varied, instructive contacts with all the world, with Life, with the atmosphere whose radiant activity enfolds us all."

I wish that I could give all these sensations of a creature who is blind and deaf. Some of them are marvellously subtle. When Helen Keller speaks of the sense of touch, and of that of smell, she tells us that she values the sense of touch more highly than eyesight. She goes so far as to say that if a good fairy were to offer her her eyesight in place of her sense of touch, she should refuse the exchange.

"The world that I see with my fingers," she says, "is alive, ruddy and satisfying. . . . Through the

sense of touch I know the faces of friends, the illimitable variety of straight and curved lines, all surfaces, the exuberance of the soil, the delicate shapes of flowers, the noble forms of trees. . . . By placing my hand on a person's lips and throat, I gain an idea of many specific vibrations, and interpret them. . . . Touch cannot bridge distance, but thought leaps the chasm. I have felt the rondure of the infant's tender form. I can apply this principle to the landscape, and to the far-off hill." Quoting from a friend's letter on the subject of a piece of sculpture she says: "Its more exquisite beauties could not be discovered by the sight, but only by the touch of the hand passed over it." She goes on to say:

"*Touch brings the blind many sweet certainties which our more fortunate fellows miss*, because their sense of touch is uncultivated. *When they look at things, they put their hands in their pockets.* No doubt that is one reason why their knowledge is often so vague, inaccurate and useless."

The following passage from her article reveals to us something with regard to the power of the sense of smell: "In my experience smell is most important, and I find that there is high authority for the nobility of the sense which we have neglected and disparaged. . . . I doubt if there is any sensation arising from sight more delightful than the odours which filter through sun-warmed, wind-tossed branches, or the tide of scents which swells, subsides, rises again, wave on wave, filling the wide world with invisible sweetness. . . . I never smell daisies without living over again the

ecstatic mornings that my teacher and I spent wandering in the fields, while I learned new words and the names of things. . . . The sense of smell has told me of a coming storm hours before there was any sign of it visible. . . . I know by smell the kind of house we enter. I have recognised an old-fashioned country house because it has several layers of odours, left by a succession of families. . . . In the evening quiet, there are fewer vibrations than in the daytime, and then I rely more largely upon smell. . . . Smell gives me more idea than touch or taste of the manner in which sight and hearing probably discharge their functions. *Touch seems to reside in the object touched, because there is a contact of surfaces and odour seems to reside not in the object smelt, but in the organ.* Since I smell a tree at a distance, it is comprehensible to me that a person sees it without touching it. . . . From exhalations I learn much about people. . . . I can distinguish the carpenter from the iron-worker, the artist from the mason or the chemist. When a person passes quickly from one place to another, I get a scent impression of where he has been — in the kitchen, the garden or the sick-room. *I gain pleasurable ideas of freshness and good taste from the odours of soap, toilette water, clean garments* . . . the dear odours of those I love are so definite, so unmistakable, that nothing can quite obliterate them. Once, long ago, in a crowded railway station, a lady kissed me as she hurried by. . . . The years are many since she kissed me. Yet her odour is fresh in my memory. . . . All infants have the same scent. . . . It is not until the age of six or seven that

children begin to have perceptible, individual odours. . . . The air is equally charged with the odours of life and of destruction. . . . Out of doors I am well aware, by smell and touch, of the ground we tread and the places we pass. Sometimes, when there is no wind, the odours are so grouped that I know the character of the country. . . . I was once without the sense of smell and taste for several days . . . and a loneliness crept over me as vast as the air whose myriad odours I missed. When I recovered the lost sense, my heart bounded with gladness. . . ."

I should like to have given every phrase of this article, "Sense and Sensibility," for every phrase contains a revelation about ourselves, and Helen Keller's optimism is most touching and sincere. Ironical people will, no doubt, attribute this to the fact that she can neither see nor hear. My belief is that her optimism is due to the fact that she sees and hears more thoroughly than we do. She takes real pride in showing us what she gets from Life and from the Universe with "only three doors to her house."

Further on we read: "Blindness has no limiting effect upon my mental vision. My intellectual horizon is infinitely wide. . . . A person deprived of one or more senses is not, as many seem to think, turned out into a trackless wilderness without landmark or guide. The blind man carries with him into his dark environment all the faculties essential to the apprehension of the visible world. . . . The infinite wonders of the universe are revealed to us as we are capable of receiving them. The keenness of our vision depends not on how

much we can see, but on how much we can feel. . . . Nature sings her most exquisite songs to those who love her. . . . I have walked in the fields at early morning. I have felt a rose-bush laden with dew and fragrance. I have known the sweet, shy ways of little children. . . . I observe, I think, I feel, I imagine. . . . The bond between humanity and me is worth keeping, even if the ideas on which I base it prove erroneous."

As a proof of the mental vision of those who are deprived of sight, Helen Keller quotes the sonnet of Mr. Clarence Hawkes, who has been blind from childhood:

THE MOUNTAIN TO THE PINE

Thou tall, majestic monarch of the wood,
That standest where no wild vines dare to creep,
Men call thee old, and say that thou hast stood
A century upon my rugged steep;

Yet unto me thy life is but a day,
When I recall the things that I have seen,—
The forest monarchs that have passed away
Upon the spot where first I saw thy green;

For I am older than the age of man,
Or all the living things that crawl or creep,
Or birds of air, or creatures of the deep;
I was the first dim outline of God's plan:
Only the waters of the restless sea
And the infinite stars in heaven are old to me.

If a blind man could really write that *the mountain was the first dim outline of God's plan* and that, to him,

the only things that are old are the waters of the restless sea and the infinite stars in heaven, we must believe in psychical vision and, for my part, I do believe in it. A curious thing is that Helen Keller notices our blindness. It makes her indignant and she speaks of it ironically. "I have walked," she says, "with people whose eyes are full of light, but who see nothing in sea or sky, nothing in city streets, nothing in books. . . . It were better far to sail forever in the night of blindness, with sense and feeling and mind, than to be thus content with the mere act of seeing. . . . The only lightless dark is the night of darkness and ignorance and insensibility. . . . *It is more difficult to teach ignorance to think than to teach an intelligent blind man to see the grandeur of Niagara.*"

From beginning to end of this human document, one feels that the soul from which it emanates is in very close communion with Nature, with the Universe, with the Eternal God. It gives out a certain psychical warmth, which leaves no doubt about its sincerity. Helen Keller is a poet and we might, therefore, distrust her imagination, if it were not that her highly cultured mind must have acquired respect for Truth and the power of discerning it. She analyses the impressions that come to her from the outside world, with great method and science. She gives us her impressions as to what the Invisible is, and she endeavours to find out how these impressions come to her. The faculties that she discovers within herself surprise and amaze her, and she is very proud of them.

This power of a blind, deaf creature revealed to me

the power that we possess, we, who hear and see. It revealed to me, at the same time, our incapacity, in not knowing how to use that power. Our sensory faculty is in five divisions, whilst that of Helen Keller is in three divisions. It is therefore possible that our organs will never acquire the acuteness of hers. By training, by concentration and by thought, we could develop this considerably. We do not yet know how to *see*, how to *hear*, nor how to *feel*. Our bodies are "vibroscopes," like Helen Keller's, but we do not understand what their vibrations say. We go on repeating, "I vibrate . . . he vibrates . . . we vibrate . . . ," because we like the words, but for us these are only words. We only look at things with our eyes and, as this blind seer says, our vision is "vague and superficial." She judges thus, even after reading our greatest poets, and her intuition has not deceived her. The instinct of every creature, of the very child, is to make use of its sense of touch for coming into contact with things. Parents and educators, thanks to a contra-instinct, prevent this. This prohibition has caused torrents of childish tears.

In the Museums, and everywhere where there is anything to see, a notice is put up to the effect that we "must not touch." And so, we put our hands in our pockets. The question is, Why do the gods create instincts and contra-instincts? Is it for the sake of exasperating and tormenting us? Formerly I used to think so. Is it not rather so that our instinct may be held in curb until it has become intelligent? The touch of ignorant fingers would destroy the beautiful accumulators of the things that are to be preserved. The fin-

gers must be educated, they must be taught respect, taught, too, to *see* and to *hear*. Will they ever understand the language of the trees, the work of the sap? Why not?

Following Helen Keller's suggestion, I held the palms of my hands out to the rays of the sun. I had a delightful sensation of their vital warmth, which is unlike anything else. I felt it mounting in waves through my veins and arteries. I realised their action on the vegetable kingdom. I understood how the things in this kingdom might die through this very force. I understood the thirst of the desert, the cracked earth, the weariness of plants towards the evening time of a fine day. From henceforth I shall appreciate the clouds which give them a little repose.

What the writer of "Sense and Sensibility" reveals to us about human odour may open a whole field of study and speculation to physiologists and psychologists. Are these impressions of hers about a cultivated sense of smell real or are they only an effect of her imagination? I do not think so. We have, each one of us, a special atmosphere. This atmosphere, which our radiations are constantly creating and renewing, isolates or groups us, it provokes sympathies or antipathies, affinities or enmities and it has a radiation, the extent of which we cannot conceive.

The dog, for instance, *feels* this human atmosphere. It attracts him irresistibly, he loves it and he cannot be happy outside it. When scientific men have learnt to register and analyse it, it will probably reveal to them a chemistry that will astound them. I fancy that kind-

hearted, ordinary sort of people must have a sweet odour and that intelligent, healthy, good people must have an aromatic odour. As to the idealists, they must have an extraordinarily complex chemistry. Their odour must be a mixture of lilies, tube-roses, musk, amber and benzoin.

However that may be, I should be more afraid of the judgment of Helen Keller's fingers and of her olfactory nerve than of the eyes of those who see. I can very well understand the grief she felt the day when she lost her sense of smell, "one of her guides," and also her "jump of joy" when it came back again to her, as I have experienced the same thing. An attack of influenza once took away my sense of smell, quite suddenly, and I was without it for two years. I felt the most ridiculous humiliation. It seemed to me that something of me was already dead. Out of stupid vanity, I would not own to it to my friends, and they continued sending me sweet-smelling flowers, little thinking that they were adding to my grief. In spite of their beauty of form and colour, those flowers were simply odious to me. One day in a fit of anger unbecoming to my age I threw a magnificent bunch of fresh irises away. I regret it to this day, for it was so stupid and bad of me. I had to go through two Springs in this way, sniffing, in despair, for the scent from the green young leaves of hedges in flower and from the blossom on the acacia-trees. I continued smelling all the flowers and crushing any aromatic herbs in my hand. It was all to no purpose as there was no scent for me and this privation was most cruel. One day, as I was writing, a whiff of

perfume from a bunch of pinky white carnations on my table came to me. I turned red with emotion and my hands trembled as I lifted the flowers to my nostrils. It was no illusion, I could smell them faintly, but, at any rate, my sense of smell was not dead. It only came back to me very gradually. I could not catch the full scent of certain flowers and that of red roses was quite disagreeable to me at first. Remembering what it really should be, I realised what notes were lacking in its chromatic scale. At present, I am thankful to say, nothing escapes me. I get the sweet smell of the yellow primrose just as well as the subtle perfume of the lily. I can even distinguish certain *shades* of perfume which I never used to notice. It is not that my sense of smell is really keener, but that I know how to use it, and I am so afraid of losing it again that I am constantly exercising it. This little experience shows that we do not know the force and the resources of our motive power.

We exercise our muscles, but we do not take care of the machinery which puts us into communication with Nature and with our fellow-creatures. Each one of our senses ought to be specially cared for, so that, if necessary, it could help or take the place of another one. At the age when, as simple folk say, people "are only fit to be buried," I increased my sensorial force by *training my thought-power.* I increased it to such a degree that I could afford to pity young people. We need another great Initiator who would place our fingers on the lips of the goddess Isis . . . of Nature,

and teach us to read them just as Miss Sullivan taught the little blind, deaf girl to read human lips. But after all, is not this what our men of science are doing? Are they not spelling for us, in our hands, the secrets which the gods have spelt to them in theirs? These secrets are necessary for our progress. And how many they have revealed to us during the last few years! They have enabled us to leave our planet and to move about in the air. They have worked with us in manufacturing those wings of which men have so often dreamed whilst working, and even whilst sleeping. One of these days they will put us into communication with the Beyond. Everywhere people are searching for this, and nowhere more seriously than in America, the country in which we imagine every one entirely occupied with trying to turn all things into dollars. In the great Universities, the psychical question is the question of the day. The soul, auto-suggestion, suggestion, telepathy, and all the phenomena which we believed to be *supernatural* are now being studied scientifically. An attempt is being made to develop mental forces by means of concentration in order that these may be used for the cure of diseases. Reviews and newspapers are full of facts which would have made our grandmothers shudder. There is, at present, an extensive *metaphysical* literature which has become thoroughly serious. After seeing how a human soul, imprisoned as it was in darkness and silence, could obtain a light which is more powerful than our daylight, and a much more complete psychical and mental vision than ours, I have

no doubt whatever that we shall succeed in getting out of our darkness and in being able to see the Invisible and to touch the Intangible.

Was it not providential that this human document on "Sense and Sensibility," which came to me from America, should arrive just as I was setting out on my last cruise in search of the *Heart of Life*? It has revealed to me much that was unknown to me, as regards the power of the Terrestrian, this poor Terrestrian, who, when seen in a crowd, with a cap on his head, looks like a big chrysanthemum! This revelation was necessary to me and some one knew that it was necessary. This time it was the blind woman spelling on the hand of the woman who sees and the woman who sees humbly thanks the blind woman.

CHAPTER III

It is not only books that are sent to us, but people too. Last week I had come to a stop in my book and a visitor was sent to me, thanks to whom I was able to decide on my next chapter. She came to me with an introduction from an acquaintance I met at the hotel, who has just undergone a serious operation at the Catholic *clinique* of Bois-Cerf.

Every time that a fresh person comes to me with an introduction in this way, I growl, like an old tired-out dog. When the introduction is from a person who is ill, and particularly from one who has undergone an operation, I give in, not so much from natural kindliness as out of pity and admiration for any one who has had the courage to face the surgeon's knife. I therefore received my visitor as pleasantly as I could. Whilst she was making her excuses for coming to see me in this way, and giving me news of her friend, I examined her with curiosity. I felt drawn towards her at once. She was tall, her figure was still elegant and she was wearing the mourning of an English widow, a nun's veil falling to her waist and a Marie Stuart border of white crêpe in her little bonnet. Her thick hair was turning grey, and her delightfully ugly, and rather bull-dog face, was lighted up by magnificent dark eyes and by dazzlingly white teeth in perfect condition. She gave me an impression of intelligence, of strong will

and of passion that had been lived. As I expected she went straight to the point immediately.

"It is not out of curiosity that I wanted to see you," she said, rather nervously. "I really needed to come and talk to you."

"Well then, let us begin at once," I said, all the more graciously as I foresaw that I was about to have a confession.

"Your books delight me and, at the same time, they exasperate me," she began. "They delight me, because I find a quantity of my own ideas and feelings in them."

She saw the smile which I could not repress.

"Very human, is it not?" she asked.

I nodded my head and she continued.

"Their optimism exasperates me though," said Madame B——. "Probably this is because I do not share it," she added, with a shade of irony in her voice. "Optimism in a young woman is natural, but I was told that you were a woman of a certain age —"

"That is very polite," I said, laughing; "my age is only too certain. You see for yourself that I am old and, nevertheless, my optimism is quite sincere."

"You have been very happy then."

"Happy? All I can say is that the supreme Fabricator, in tracing out my destiny, like that of so many others, seems to have endeavoured to go against all my hereditary instincts, all my tastes and all my ambitions. Ah, how they have suffered and protested, all these instincts, these tastes, these ambitions! At present, I am obliged to recognise that this hard treatment was neces-

sary for the intellectual development which has made my old age endurable."

"You might say enviable."

"Oh, no, endurable. That is a great deal for old age. If I had been consulted, I should have preferred being happy when I was young. This would have been unwise, perhaps. Then, too, you must not imagine that I live in an ivory tower, or that, like so many optimists, I am resigned to the sufferings of other people. I am so conscious of animal and human suffering that I feel it myself magnetically. A Frenchman, who writes as Paul Wenz, made me shudder to my very marrow by describing the horrors of two years of drought in the Australian bush, where he was stationed. I cannot even write the details; they are like a nightmare. It is very difficult to me to forgive the misery inflicted on certain good creatures which are quite defenceless. It is more difficult still to understand why so many others, who would have developed magnificently with just a few rays of sunshine, have been planted on the shady side of life and have withered away and died. I should be tempted to cry out continually against the injustice of things, if I did not know that we always exaggerate the effect of these ills."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, for, considering circumstances, I ought to have suffered much more than I have done. The state of grace given us is one of our greatest blessings. It is one of the forces of Nature. It creates a force, thanks to which adverse forces are attenuated or even annihilated. Then too, this is given to us all."

"Yes, there is no denying that!"

"Then," I continued, "the whole of Life is not just in the dramas of our own existence. We must come out of ourselves, look at Life objectively, in its various energies, in its infinite transformations and in its evolutions. We must admire it in the gradual transformation of minerals and of metals, in the fecundation of flowers, in the creation of the animal and of man, in the weaving of their destinies. There is, in all this, a revelation of beauty, of wisdom, of subtle art and of forethought which reassures us and compels our admiration. One of the days this summer, I had a beautiful bunch of roses on my table. I noticed that many of the leaves were cut out in the most surprisingly distinct way. It seemed as though the semi-circular cutting-out must have been done with the smallest scissors. I guessed that this was the work of an insect and I wondered what insect? For the thousandth time, I blamed my ignorance. It was just as though some one had heard my silent question, for, the following week, I received an American magazine. I learnt from this publication that the insect whose work had puzzled me was a wild bee named Mégachile, which makes its nest in the hollow of trees and this nest is composed of rose leaves. Nothing less than this! It cuts them out with its mandibles and then, with its head, feet and abdomen, it makes them into a kind of tube with cells. In each cell of this royal little cradle, it places an egg and then the food of the larva which is to come to life. This food is a tiny ball of 'bee's bread,' made of pollen and honey kneaded together. The nest sometimes contains

as many as thirty cells and requires more than a thousand flower petals. Is not that adorable?"

"It certainly is," agreed Madame R—— with her eyes slightly misty.

"And when the Mégachile has given all the life that is enclosed within its ovaries, it dies."

"Oh, that is just the cruelty of Nature."

"Yes, but then it has had love, maternity and the glory of continuing its species. Is not that a great deal for a bee?"

"It would be a great deal for a woman," answered my visitor.

"It dies and something of itself will live again with the rose-leaves that it has collected. The thought that created all that must be of feminine essence and I am sure that a subtle joy must have been given to the wild bee in the work imposed upon it. When we see marvels of this kind, we must be convinced that those who elaborate them are neither evil nor cruel."

"And do you include human nature in your admiration?" asked Madame R—— in a harsh tone of voice.

"What do you call human nature?"

This simple question seemed to disconcert my visitor.

"Unkindness, ingratitude, selfishness."

"And also kindness, abnegation, altruism," I added.

"Yes, but in much smaller quantities."

"In much larger quantities, I assure you," I replied. "Besides, faults and qualities, vices and virtues are all psychical forces."

"Psychical forces, our faults and our qualities?"

"Certainly. Have you never seen them?"

"Oh, we see them without seeing them and, if we do not see them, we feel them."

"That is just it," I answered, smiling. "These forces are in Nature, they form part of the Universal Soul. They are incarnated in all creatures, in the insect which has only two cells, as well as in the man who has millions. They are the cards with which the game of life is played. There are some which are big trump cards, there are others which make us win or lose the game. They are all necessary, though."

"Necessary? All of them?"

"In order to be convinced of this we have only to consider the immense and phenomenal action of vanity. This infinitely small thing, the manifestations and schemes of which appear so ridiculous to us sometimes, is one of the most important agents in the world. It urges on all the energies. It is to be found everywhere, and in everything, in religion, in politics, in love. It helps to create charitable societies, to build temples and superb monuments. It is useful and it does not ask for much payment in return, as it is satisfied with words and honours, even with posthumous honours, and it accepts all false coin. The 'Wheel of Things' would turn too slowly, if it were not for vanity, snobbism and ambition. Then too, egoism, which concentrates, leaves room for generosity, which scatters abroad. The cruelty of one person excites the pity of every one. Envy is the necessary stimulant for many people. Hypocrisy obliges the inferior being to behave in a way which does him good. Impiety, lying and injustice bring about fine reaction sometimes. I

imagine these psychical forces as so many differently coloured waves. It seems to me that love, friendship and humanitarianism must be remarkably brilliant."

"And what about ingratitude?" asked Madame R—— in so harsh a tone that, for the second time, I was struck by it.

"Ingratitude has always been called black and not without reason, as black absorbs light and gives none back. Avarice and selfishness always seem grey to me, and jealousy and hatred of a greenish hue. Joking apart, though, if we are to understand the rôle of these various factors, we must watch their work patiently for a very long time. But you see the difficulty is that we dare not look evil in the face. Some people consider it their duty to ignore it, and others delight in playing with it. We ought to approach it with respect."

"Approach evil with respect!" exclaimed Madame R——.

"Yes, because it is a primordial force and we ought to work for its evolution, so that it may be transformed into good. I fancy that this is our unique *raison d'être* and it includes all the other reasons. I tried for a long time to *see* evil and good, to find a scientific formula for them and, finally, I hit upon one that satisfies me."

"Ah, do tell me what it is," begged my visitor.

"Well, my idea is that *good is a reactive agent which shows up the presence of evil, and that evil is a reactive agent which shows up the presence of good.*"

Madame R—— repeated my words slowly.

"But," she began, and then, her face suddenly lighting up, she added: "I understand; I understand perfectly well what you mean. It is moral chemistry."

"Neither more nor less," I replied. "Man is a marvel: I have more and more admiration and respect for him every day of my life."

"Oh, Madame, how do you look at him in order to arrive at this?"

"I look at him objectively. I grant you that this collaborator with Providence is not much to look at. Even the best looking one is not very beautiful. There is nothing very noble about the most worthy specimen and the very best one is not really good, but such as he is, he represents the divine work of millions of years. He has been created cell by cell, segment by segment; he is the synthesis of the three kingdoms of Nature. He bears within him the past, the present and the future. He bears within him, too, the secret of immortality. He has all the smallness of the atom and all the greatness of a future god. Certain savants are straining all their faculties in a desperate effort to guess what the inhabitant of Mars can be, and they do not even try to find out what the inhabitant of this Earth is."

"Yes," agreed my visitor, smiling. "One of my cousins spends his time speculating on what our neighbours in the sky are, and he knows so little about his fellow-creatures that a mere child could dupe him."

"He probably disdains the study of mankind, because it seems too easy for him. In reality, there is no study more difficult, and more impossible even, for

man is an individuality forming a part of millions of individuals. In olden times it was believed that the intellect was to be found within the liver, that the soul dwelt within the heart, the mind in the loins, the affective emotions in the intestines and the *conscient* part of us in the very blood. This was the Jewish belief. Not until last century did the physiologists discover that the brain is the seat of all our faculties."

"Do you mean to say that men have taken so long to discover that they think with their brains? Oh, that really is remarkable," exclaimed Madame R——.

"Their sensations deceived them. The right time for that discovery had not arrived, and every discovery serves to start a fresh chapter in the epopee of the Earth. Then too, man, having been created last will, perhaps, be the last to be known."

"That is very probable."

"He has been studied metaphysically before being studied physiologically, so that he has remained a something abstract even to scientific minds. As he is so little known, he has been slandered from every pulpit, and from every public platform. Sincerely or insincerely, people have endeavoured to make him believe that he was born in sin, that he is a well of iniquity, evil in the very depths of his soul. This is not true and never has been true. Then, too, if we are to be just, we must judge him merely as a Terrestrian."

"Man a Terrestrian?" she repeated in perplexity.

"Is he anything else?" I asked.

"No — you can call him that —"

"It is not that I merely call him that. The inhabi-

tant of the Earth is an Earth-dweller. We must look at man in this objective way, if we are to understand his rôle here below. If we are to understand that he is part of the Universe, we must realise that he is an accumulator."

"An accumulator, man an accumulator!" exclaimed my visitor in a scared way that amused me immensely.

"And a radiator," I continued, speaking slowly, in order to enjoy the effect of my words. "He is a receiver too, a resonator, a transformer and a transmitter. He is all that."

"Are you joking?" asked my visitor, her dark eyes wide open in surprise.

"Not at all. You understand the meaning of all those terms, do you not?"

"Yes, the various discoveries of recent years have made them all more or less familiar."

"And all these discoveries had to be made, so that we might learn to know the true functions of man. He is a fighting animal, creation's *Dreadnought*. A workman accustomed to machinery, or to electricity, would be able to understand him better than the greatest physiologists of olden times."

"I am afraid I do not quite grasp your meaning," said Madame R——, knitting her eyebrows in her effort to understand.

"You do not grasp my meaning?" I repeated. "Is not the body, with its bones, nerves, muscles and blood, an accumulator of physical forces, of those forces, the exteriorisation of which you can see in a battery, in all work, and in every material struggle?"

"There is some truth in that," admitted Madame R——.

"There is a great deal of truth in it," I said. "Is not the brain, with its millions of cells, planted like flowers in that fertile and mysterious grey matter, an accumulator of the psychical forces which we call thoughts, ideas and sentiments? Is it not an accumulator of innumerable impressions, pictures and memories?"

"Why, yes."

"And when, in one form or another, it gives these forces back to Life, does it not become a radiator?"

"Certainly."

"And is not man a receiver of the ambient radiations? These are by no means agreeable always. Certain political personages seem to me like St. Sebastian. Certain society women must be regular pincushions. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand quite well."

"The Terrestrian," I continued, "is a resonator, a sort of table of harmony, which receives and gives out the infinite vibrations of the visible and invisible worlds. Besides this, he is a transformer and a wonderful transformer. With the various aliments he makes blood, nerves, muscles, bones, tissues, flesh, caloric, electricity and what not? By means of his will-power and his thoughts he does deeds. To sum up briefly, he transforms material substance into immaterial force, and physical force into psychical force."

"It is impossible to deny that."

"He is also a transmitter of life, death, health, dis-

ease, joy and sorrow. He is a vehicle of ideas, of messages, of orders, of a million things of which we have not yet a suspicion."

"I see," said Madame R——, who had gradually begun to comprehend.

"Poor Terrestrian!" I continued. "He is moved about by formidable currents. Awake or asleep, he is constantly being worked upon by invisible agents. His movements are combined with those of beings of whose very existence he is, perhaps, not aware. He is carrying about within himself the germs of his own destruction, hidden enemies which compel him to keep up a constant warfare. In his brain, the phenomenon of mirages is constantly taking place. This auto-mirage may be wealth, honours, or a religious, artistic, or scientific ideal. In order to attain what he thinks he sees, he walks day and night, he springs over obstacles, overturns or crushes all that opposes him, and then, when he actually grasps it, he says: 'Was this all?' And yet, in pursuing his chimera, which was his destiny, he was helping in the divine work, which is his work too. When one realises all this, one must feel profound admiration for man, no matter on which step of the ladder he is placed, and also a tenderness and pity which will lead us on to the true humanitarianism."

"But," objected my visitor, "man appears to you like a machine."

"Yes," I replied, "like an automobile, every molecule and every organ of which contains soul and gives out soul. He is like a machine animated by the Spirit of God, by 'the Spirit that moved upon the waters.'

I have realised that the human head is a motor, the power of which can be increased or lessened, the machinery improved or damaged, a motor on which innumerable forces are at work. I frequently say to myself: 'This one is only a poor little five horse-power' or 'That one is a forty horse-power.' When I happen to come across one that is a hundred horse-power, I hover round it mentally, with an admiration that does me good. I must own, though, that I do not often meet with one of these on my path."

"Without fishing for compliments, what should you think I represent?" asked Madame R——.

"A fifteen horse-power which might become a twenty-five."

"I am glad to hear that. I have an auto of that force and it gets over a great deal of ground."

"The first time that human heads appeared to me like so many living motors, I was at the theatre, and the idea of these heads, bald or covered with hair, as motors, made me shake with laughter. On thinking this over, I began to realise what was really taking place under these craniums and I was deeply touched."

"Then you look at people and things within themselves, as though you are looking in a mirror."

"Yes."

"And that is what you mean by looking at them objectively?"

"Yes."

"I know the meaning of the word objective, but I had never understood just what it signified, or how to apply it."

"Well, you would find that this objective observation, at your age, might become an exhaustless source of interest. You should train your mind to this kind of observation."

"So that I may become a twenty-five horse-power?"

"So that you may see more and see with greater clearness, and so that you may learn to reflect. There are so few people who have any idea of the real pleasure that this kind of working of the mind gives. So-called orthodox people do not think, because they believe they have no right to do so, and free-thinkers take advantage of their freedom for not thinking at all."

"That is quite true," said Madame R——, laughing.

"There are so many discoveries now-a-days," I continued, "of forces of which we had no idea, that people will soon be obliged to reflect, and they will then realise the fact that free-will is an impossible idea."

"Free-will! Ah, that is just what I wanted to discuss with you. My husband was a thinker and he did not believe in it, but there were so many things in which he no longer believed that I could not trust to him. I was wrong, perhaps. Hereditary beliefs, that date so far back, become a sort of habit of mind with us."

"Yes, nineteen persons out of twenty confuse the divine will with the old fatalism and say, in the most inapt way, that if they are not free they have only to fold their arms and let things take their course. It is just because we are *not* free that we cannot fold our arms. We have every one of us been created for the sake of doing something, and that something is necessary for the harmony, not only of this world of ours,

but for the harmony of the whole Universe. Fatalism cannot exist in Nature. We all of us die *killed*, in one way or another, but you may be quite sure that no death is the result of chance. You have only to reflect that the present always prepares the future. As we do not know what the future is to be, how could we prepare it?"

"Ah," said my visitor, "if you only knew how much I need to believe that things are determined beforehand."

"You can very well believe it. Let us take just one proof among a million. You know the influence that temperature has upon people, upon their health, their actions and even upon their thoughts. Well, try to make the barometer or the thermometer go up or down. These two little instruments register forces, in face of which the whole human race is powerless. That ought to suffice for proving to us the inanity of the idea of free-will."

"What could a magistrate reply though, if a criminal pleaded that he had committed theft, or even murder, but that he was not free, as he had not made himself?"

"The magistrate could only reply that he, too, was not free to pardon the offence. The man had broken the higher laws which govern all society, and the magistrate is appointed to see that those laws are respected. Those whom we call criminals are probably the unsound in mind or body, the degenerates, or inferior creatures, of whom Providence makes use for certain of its works."

"And where is Divine justice to be found then?"

"In the state of grace which enables the unfortunates of this world to bear their sorrows, in the forces which enter into them, in the evolution and the reincarnations which await them like us."

"Ah, you believe in reincarnation?"

"Yes, I do, certainly."

"I, too."

"In our times, now that we have a little light, the attitude of those who are with condemned prisoners is quite different from what it formerly was. The priest kisses them and the lawyer and the warder shake hands with them. They grasp the very hand that has killed some one. All that is good in them comes out. This is like a gleam of the approaching dawn — of reincarnation."

"Yes, and when we have some great sorrow, which seems to us undeserved, we look for the justice of God and can only find it within ourselves. As for me, I am not a free-thinker, but a free believer. There is a distinct shade between the two."

"There is a whole colour even," I said.

"Sometimes I wonder whether I am not an old hypocrite. I have not what is known as faith, as that is blind. There are many things which my mind can no longer accept, but, all the same, on account of my position as lady of the manor, I am obliged to act as though I did accept everything. I go to Church and am a member of the Church."

"And quite right, too," I said. "People of humble class, and very many others as well, only see God inside the Church. If you did not go to the services, they

would imagine that you did not believe in Him, and you would be encouraging their indifference and, perhaps, causing them to begin to doubt. We can go to any kind of divine worship without the slightest hypocrisy, as it is always a homage to God."

"I am glad that you think that," said Madame R—— with a sigh of relief. "I am not a very fervent Church member. Although I admire the liturgy, I avoid High Mass on account of the sermon. Our priest is one of the best men in the world, but, according to him, only the Church and her dogmas exist. He says nothing to our peasants of what he ought to say, nothing that will help to make them more generous-minded and more honest, nothing that will help to make their lives more worthy, and that irritates me. One Sunday, I happened to ask my cook whether there had been a good sermon. She had just come back from High Mass.

"'Oh, nothing very special,' she answered. 'The priest explained to us about the equality of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. It seems to me,' she added, 'that all that concerns God more than it does us.'"

"Ah, the common sense of people of that class!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, indeed. And then, by way of commentary, my worthy Veronica continued: 'It would be better to teach parents, children and husbands their duty, it seems to me.' She was quite right."

"Have you ever spoken to your priest on the subject of reincarnation?"

"Oh, no. I often invite him to my house and I should not like to spoil his pleasure."

"This belief has always existed in the soul of the world. We have heard more about it in recent years and it has taken a more scientific form. Besides, it is not contrary to any religion."

"Whilst the belief in non-free-will is absolute heterodoxy."

"I am not so sure of that. Jesus, for instance, knew that he was doing the will of his Father and not his own will."

A strange expression came over my visitor's face.

"If we were really not free, forgiveness would be more easy. We might even love our enemies," she said, as though speaking to herself. Then, suddenly remembering me, she asked abruptly: "Have you ever been deceived by some one very dear to you?"

"No, never," I answered.

"Ah, then you do not know what grief is."

"Oh, yes, indeed I do. There is a fine collection of miseries in this world and I can answer for it that I have had my share of them."

"Well, then, I will tell you my story," said Madame R——, clenching the little handkerchief nervously that she was holding. "When I was twenty-five I married a man with whom I was passionately in love, a man whom I still love and who was devoted to me up to the very last. We should have been too happy, if we had only had children. My husband was a widower when I married him, and he had a little son, of six years old, who was his living image. That alone would have made

me love the child, even if I had not had a strong maternal instinct."

Madame R—— was silent for a minute. She then continued brusquely, in an aggressive tone that was almost comic: "Can you tell me why Nature gives the maternal instinct to women who have no children? Then, too, why are children sent to women who only kill them?"

"Because struggle is necessary in order that Life may be engendered, and also for its very alimentation."

A little mocking smile came to my visitor's face.

"I wonder what Providence gives you in return for the way you take up the cudgels in its defence?" she said.

"A feeling of great satisfaction," I replied. "It is much more agreeable to plead for Providence than for the devil. Our tasks on earth are not all painful ones. Yours, for instance, must have given you a great deal of joy."

"Yes, by way of preparation for a great sorrow," answered Madame R—— bitterly. "You shall judge for yourself. I brought up my husband's son just as though he had been my own. There was no merit in this, as all I did for the boy seemed to me as though it were done for the father. When I rocked him to sleep in my arms, it used to seem to me as though it were my husband as a child once more."

My visitor stopped again, and then said with a little embarrassment: "I am telling you everything, you see, but it is so that you may understand my indignation and my grief."

"Yes, and I admire the subtleness of that sentiment which allowed you to revive the childhood and youth of the man you loved. I admire all this as a novelist and as a psychologist. You must have experienced to the full the delights of love. You must now accept the other side of it."

"No, I do not accept it," replied Madame R—— with sorrowful hardness, "for I have had to pay too dearly for it. I devoted myself, body and soul, to that child. He had inherited dangerous germs from his mother. Thanks to all my care and to the precautions I took, he developed a good constitution. The doctor acknowledged this. I began to study again, in order to help him in his studies, and I coached him regularly with his home lessons. Heaven only knows all the patience and all the little ruses it needed in order to urge him on. He passed his examinations brilliantly, and had me to thank for it."

"But he must have been very fond of you," I said.

"I thought he was. My friends envied me and I used to repeat over and over again, with the greatest pride, that stupid untrue saying: 'As we sow, so do we reap.' As long as he needed me I was his 'beloved mother.' There was 'no other mother in the world like me.' He had a whole stock of pretty phrases for me. And then — he married."

"Ah," I said, smiling.

"Yes, ah!" repeated Madame R——. "He took me out to a certain dinner-party, one evening that my husband happened to be away. He met a very young

widow and fell in love with her at first sight. Six months later he married her. She was very fair, with a beautiful complexion and good colouring, one of those women who can do what they like with even the strongest of men. During the first year of his marriage, my step-son used to run in every morning for a few minutes, to see us. He seemed to like coming to the old home. Then, under various pretexts, he came less often, and when he visited us at our country house, his stay was shorter every time. His father was rather hurt at this and I tried to invent excuses for his son. All the same it did hurt my husband's feelings and I have never forgiven that. The birth of the first child was a real joy to me, and at present I consider that joy idiotic. I felt myself a grandmother to the very depths of my being. When I went to choose the little garments for the layette, I was in the seventh heaven. It was like being in love again. My maternal instinct had got the better of me once more."

"Yes," I said, "and at a critical age."

Madame R—— looked at me and then, colouring slightly, she said meekly: "Possibly."

"And very naturally," I added.

"Naturally, oh, no! However that may be," she continued, "the child was a fine boy, but I was not able to see much of him. His mother managed to keep me at a distance from his cradle."

"Were you not on good terms with her?"

"I cannot exactly say that. We were both of us too well educated to quarrel, but I could always feel her between my step-son and me."

"And she, very likely, felt you between her husband and herself."

"My conscience is perfectly clear. I have not a single word or deed, injurious to her, with which to reproach myself."

"I can quite believe that, but all the same you have too much individuality to be able to play the part of the mother-in-law who does not count. She was probably jealous of your influence over the man you had brought up."

"Yes, that was just it, of course; and so, in the most perfidious way, she managed to bring about a definite rupture. My dear husband died suddenly, four years ago," she continued, in a broken voice. "His son, with no respect for my grief, which he knew would be intense, and for my feelings, although he knew me to be strictly honourable, had the seals affixed in my home on the advice of his wife's brother. I was left with six pounds of ready money and was obliged to borrow from a friend. He went to law about his father's will, as I had full control of all my husband's property. My son-in-law had come into his mother's fortune on attaining his majority, so that he was in a very good position. I won three law-suits and, after this, on meeting him one day, with his wife under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, he passed by without taking any notice of me. I felt my heart leap within me, and I almost staggered as I walked along. I neither saw nor heard anything for the next few minutes. Just think what it meant! I had been cut dead by the man whom I had cared for from childhood, whom I had

nursed through illnesses, at whose bedside I had passed night after night!"

"Alas," I said, "your step-son is evidently a weak man and weak people are the worst kind of good ones."

"Yes, his mother was a mere doll and he has inherited her character —"

Madame R—— stopped short for a minute, and then continued: "Ah, now I am running down a poor, dead woman. That is abominable! You see what the remembrance of all this does for me. If I could believe absolutely in determinism, things would seem quite different. I was never created for hatred and it upsets me, as it is an element foreign to my nature."

"Have you not tried some form of diversion?"

"One of our modern diversions you mean, I suppose?" said my companion, with a little shrug that was very French. "The Red Cross Society, dispensary work, settlements? Yes, but I saw so many things there that were disappointing, that I dropped all that. There are plenty of charitable societies in our country, but they come to an end just as easily as they are started. There is no cohesion."

"You must remember," I said, "that, for centuries, public charity has been in the hands of the Church. Lay people want to take it up now, and to utilise all the new forces in their turn. They do not know how to go about it, though, as it needs a long apprenticeship. They will succeed finally, and perhaps a real, intelligent, well-thought-out humanitarianism will be the result of their effort."

"Well, I went back to Brittany to 'cultivate my

garden.' My husband had instilled into me his love of Nature, of Mother Earth. He managed to make a good farmer's wife out of the ignorant, frivolous Parisian that I was formerly. With the help of the steward whom he had taught, I manage our Louvic estate fairly well. I continue the plantation of trees, which he began years ago — for his grandchildren. It seems to me all the time as though I were working with him. I am also sowing more seed — of ingratitude and future sorrow. Like one of your heroines, I am bringing up a little family of twelve orphans: six boys and six girls. I am helped in this by three excellent women, who have the true maternal instinct and no children of their own. The little home is well provided for and will continue."

A sudden inspiration came to me.

"You are just the person I wanted to meet," I exclaimed.

"Really!" said Madame R——, with unfeigned pleasure.

"Have you noticed that I speak a great deal about children and animals, in my books?"

"Have I noticed it? Why, that is just what attracted me!"

"Well, then, I will now confess that for a very, very long time I never noticed children. I am ashamed to say it, but children bored me. Of late years my thoughts have turned towards them in the most curious way and, with ever increasing indignation, I have noticed how little parents and those who educate children understand them. Thanks to this lack of comprehen-

sion the poor little ones are martyrs every day of their lives."

"Do you not think that you rather exaggerate things?"

"No, mothers do not seem to know instinctively what their little ones want. They do not recognise the cry of hunger, or the cry of suffering, still less do they recognise the cry by means of which Nature is preparing the child's lungs. Mothers neither know how to dress nor how to feed their children."

"Ah, there I agree. In Brittany, infantile mortality is largely due to ignorance. Women will tell you that their baby is only six months old and that it can take the same food as its father and mother. They consider that as a proof of great prowess. It certainly is, but only the very strong children survive the test."

"Last summer, in the hotel where I was staying, I remember seeing a tall, beautiful woman hugging a two-year-old child frantically. The poor little thing cried out, struggled out of her arms and made off. 'That child will grow up heartless,' she said to me. 'He cannot bear to be fondled.' 'I should think not, if you always fondle him like that,' I replied. 'Just think, he has the most delicate flesh and fragile little bones. You simply bruise him with all your strength.' 'Oh,' exclaimed the mother, the colour coming into her face, as she gazed at me in amazement, 'I never thought of that.' This lack of comprehension," I continued, "is to be seen with regard to everything, physical and moral health, character, natural gifts and capacities. A child is caressed one minute and scolded the next. He

is dragged away suddenly from his games, or roused out of his sleep. He is taken out for a walk when he needs rest and put to bed when he wants to go out. The other day I met a child walking along half asleep. I came very near stopping the mother and giving her my opinion."

"How do you think it comes about that Providence gives to animals an instinctive knowledge of what is necessary for its young and withholds this knowledge from mankind?" asked Madame R——.

"Probably because mankind has to learn to know the child, in order to learn to know himself."

"Perhaps that is it."

"Habit blinds a mother and prevents her from seeing her children. I have only known one who could observe them objectively and judge them fairly. She delighted in their conversations and in the droll ideas that came to them. Unfortunately, the father had stuck fast in the ruts of bygone centuries, so that he spoilt all the good that she tried to do. I suppose that, among animals, the parents always agree."

"Let us hope so, indeed!" exclaimed Madame R—— with comic fervour.

"Have you seen many children with really joyful faces?" I asked.

Madame R—— thought for a moment and then said, ruefully: "No, I do not think I have."

"I have seen a great many with such a pathetic expression that the tears have come to my eyes and that I have been haunted for days. Without any sentimental exaggeration, it is my belief that the child and the

horse are the two creatures in this world which are the least understood. If I have been clear enough in explaining to you my ideas of the workings of our motive power, you will readily understand that the cells of the child are influenced by all the vibrations of those of the grown-up persons with whom it lives. I am only surprised that there are not more cases of brain fever. Imagine the delights of a child who is blessed with a nervous mother or an irritable father."

"I can imagine them only too well," said Madame R——, smiling.

"And still more abominable is the fact that badly paid teachers are given to the child, teachers who are like living gramophones. They are ill-fed and badly dressed and they have no prestige at all. Harassed by other work, which they are obliged to do in order to provide for the needs of their families, they have neither time to think nor to rest, and their poor pupils are affected by their worries and their moods. The nation which is civilised enough to know what *the child* really is, will pay its teachers, not in a republican way, but royally. Their salary ought to be higher than that of deputies or even of senators. That would be justice. Men and women teachers ought to wear the insignia of magistrates. This would increase their prestige and prestige is necessary. The French love their children, but they do not care for *the child*. I have already written this and I am writing it again, as there are some truths which should be cried aloud at all the cross-roads. Just think of it, two hundred thousand little ones, on an average, are given over to

the tender mercy of public charity, and two-thirds die before they are adults."

"Horrors!" exclaimed Madame R——.

"Yes, indeed," I continued. "They are poor human specimens, I know, but they have all the more need of being cared for physically and morally. Ridiculous prices are paid to the foster-parents and the poor little ones suffer from their earliest days. Then, some two hundred francs a month are given, I believe, to women-inspectors, who mean well, but who are quite ignorant and who are constantly being duped."

"This inspection ought to be done gratuitously," said Madame R——, "by charitable women of the higher or middle class. There are plenty of women who would give their services, if they were asked. The fact is, though, that in all this public charity, those who administer it are really the very ones who are receiving it."

"If we cared for the child," I continued, "we should not allow all these poor little ones to be handicapped by the name of charity children. We ought to call them 'wards of the State.' Does not the State mean the people at present? In order to lessen the number of secret births and increase the birth statistics, marriage ought to be facilitated as it is in England and America. Without any publication of banns, or formalities whatever, every ministerial official should be empowered to unite an engaged couple, accompanied by two witnesses and producing their birth certificates, by way of proving that they have attained the age which the law demands."

"Would not that be a great slight on paternal and maternal authority?"

"No, the greater number of young people will always respect that. Of course, I know that a large number of young couples would pay dearly for their rashness, but the product of their rash love would have a name and the protection of the law."

Madame R—— smiled.

"Ah, you are a novel-writer," she said, "and you would like to create some fresh situations."

"No, I should like to think that there would be less deserted children and more French men and women. It would be a way to make French people lose that *fear for the future* which no other nation has to such a degree. It is just this fear which is one of the great causes of the depopulation which humiliates us. When I see how little we understand the education of the child, I dare not regret the depopulation though."

"Oh!" said my visitor, with a whole world of reproach in her tone.

"No; for the child, which might be such a magnificent medium for conciliation and emulation, is the victim of our religious and political dissensions. In the voluntary schools, for instance, there is a religious paternity and maternity, which is both good and necessary for certain natures. Parents who are in any way dependent on the government dare not send their children to these schools. Such tyranny is revolting and unintelligent. We have neither Christianity nor patriotism. The result of all this is, that when our future citizens leave school, instead of playing together, they look at

each other like snarling bulldogs and exchange uncomplimentary epithets, treating each other respectively as 'godless heathen' or as 'priest-ridden bigots.' And this is the way in which fraternity is implanted in the hearts and minds of our new-comers in this world. This hostility will gradually increase and will create the division which weakens. And whilst the sheep-dogs are fighting with each other, the wolves have a good time."

"Do you not think it would be a good thing if women had a voice in public affairs?"

"They are not yet prepared for it. If they had presented themselves to Parliament with a *Mothers' programme*, Parliament would have opened its doors to them, but they are incapable of drawing such a programme up. And believe me, it is the Latin mother who, with her ignorance, her unintelligent love and her passionate selfishness, weakens the race."

"But if we are not free, it must be that Providence wills that the child should suffer and be misunderstood, that parents should be blind, that the natality of our country should decrease. Do you suppose that the end of our race is written 'on the wall'?"

"I hope that it is only our evolution that is written there. It is the will of the gods that we should live, and that will has created the struggle, but the struggle is gradually becoming more intelligent. For some years now, people have been thinking about the child, and they are now beginning to have a certain curiosity about all that concerns it. I am told that a naturalist, who is now studying snails, has about fifteen hundred. He is

anxious to discover whether they are blind. That is all very well and very useful, perhaps, but I should like the child to be studied zoologically. And that is what I wish you would do."

"What a fine idea!" exclaimed my visitor, clasping her well-gloved hands in her excitement, whilst a flash of joy beautified her face. "Do you think I am capable though?" she asked doubtfully.

"I am sure you are. You have been prepared for it. You have twelve subjects, boys and girls. That is quite enough for one person. Take notes of their sex, age, and, as far as you can, of their atavism. Observe the shape of the forehead of each of them, the colour of the eyes, the quality of the hair, for the human fleece reveals a great deal. Then, too, notice the form of the ears or *receivers*, the shape of the nails. Everything is of importance in Nature and nothing is left to chance. Read these little ones like so many divine manuscripts. Observe all their movements, whether reflex or conscious, and try to discern them. Watch them sleep, work, play, eat, and pray. I shall be very much surprised if you do not find, in this study, an enormous amount of interest and of keen pleasure."

"And what am I to do with these notes?"

"Give them to me, so that I may make use of them, and then I will send them on to London, to the principal of an institute where women educators are being prepared and where the child is being studied. This principal is a large-hearted and extremely intelligent woman. I will introduce you to each other and I am sure you will both fall in love at first sight."

"There is an institute in Paris where nurses are being trained."

"A French mother would never want a person in her house who knew more than she did," I said, laughing. "I once asked a young wife why she did not have an English nurse for her little girl? 'Oh, no,' she exclaimed, 'I would never have one of those princesses in my house!' I only wish that the government organised courses of lessons on the child in every district, rich and poor alike. I envy you," I added, "because you still have time to study children."

"I should never have thought of such a thing," said Madame R——, putting her hand on mine and pressing it warmly. "You have opened out a fine path for me."

"You had to come to me for me to point it out to you, and I am very proud of that fact," I said. "That is a very good illustration for you of Providential work. You will not be long before you will be ready to acknowledge that the ingratitude of your son has served to help on your own progress."

"If I admit that it has served to help me to rise morally it certainly lowers him, does it not? How do you account for that?"

"We know nothing about the reactions which may take place in his mind. Thanks to these, he may realise all that he owes to you."

"May God grant that!"

"When I think of you, you will seem much greater to me among your little orphans than if I saw you merely spoiling your grandchildren."

"That may be, but, all the same, I have no near relatives and, as I am alone in the world, it seemed to me that I had a right to expect my share of family happiness. Do not let us say any more about that, though. If I go on pitying myself, it would seem ungrateful to Providence and to you. I want to ask you one thing, though. Will you promise to come and see me at Louvic and stay with me a little time?"

"With pleasure," I answered; "if I am spared."

"Thank you for the promise. You must see my human specimens and tell me whether my zoological studies are satisfactory."

My visitor glanced at my little exercise books lying on the table. "I am ashamed of having interrupted your work," she began.

"On the contrary, you have helped me," I replied, smiling.

"I have helped you?"

"Yes, you were sent to me, for you began to speak about a subject that I was thinking over. You came to me in a furious state of mind. Your pessimism brought my optimism to the surface and helped me to develop it. If you will allow me, I should like to make use of this conversation, quite anonymously, of course."

"Do so, by all means," assented my visitor.

"You see, I am not a Montaigne and it would be very difficult for me to write an essay giving the gist of all this. Then, too, in my opinion essays are not sufficiently living. It is my good fortune to have a friend who is quite sincere, whose judgment I consider sure. I read what I write to her and I feel, mag-

netically, whether she thinks it good or bad. When I come to the dialogues, she leans forward, with an instinctive movement of approval, which seems to be interpreted to me by the very feather in her hat. I conclude that I am better in dialogue and I wanted to be *better* in this chapter."

My visitor laughed heartily, showing all her beautiful teeth.

"What a curious author you are," she said; "you are not at all afraid of showing your literary strings."

"No, for the most interesting thing in a book is the way in which it is made."

"Well, that certainly is objectivism, if I am not very much mistaken. I am going to train myself to look at things in this way, if only in order to discover the beauty of ugliness," said Madame R——, as she rose to take leave.

"You will then have discovered a very great thing," I said. I held out my hand to her and she raised it to her lips.

"Remember, I have your promise," she said, still holding my hand. "You are coming to Louvic. You have sown the seed; you must come and see it sprouting."

I nodded without speaking. A kind of superstitious fear prevents me now from making any plans or giving a verbal promise.

CHAPTER IV

THE objective vision of people and things has revealed, and continues to reveal to me, the incommensurable greatness of our atom lives. It has torn me away from habit, which made me deaf and blind. Every instant I see the wonderful mechanism, the real beauty of certain familiar acts, the grandeur and mystery of which frequently amaze and startle me. It seems to me as though I see them for the first time. I constantly have the sensation of something quite fresh and new to me. This is a sensation for which those who are *blasés* would pay a great price, and I would not give it up to them for millions of money. At the post-office of the Rue des Capucines, I once saw a work-girl receive a letter at the *poste restante* department. She looked about twenty years of age and was a pretty girl with rough, fair hair. She was wearing a black dress, which was covered with white threads. She did not open in an elegant way the envelope that was handed to her. Her eager fingers tore it open and her eyes literally drank in the contents. Her anæmic face flushed pink, her eyelids trembled, her nostrils quivered, a smile hovered over her lips and, when she looked up, her face was so fresh and radiant that she might have just absorbed some magic cordial. I was so struck by the transformation that it positively thrilled me. Those little black letters, which looked as though they had been traced by the meanderings of some insect, contained an invisible

force which, like a ray of sunshine, had penetrated the flesh and bones of this human face, and had caused transfiguring joy, the signs of which I had just seen. The phenomenon had, up to then, seemed quite commonplace, but, in reality, there was a great mystery lying underneath it! It was I who was commonplace! Those little black characters, buried in the depths of the girl's pocket, together with a coarse pocket-handkerchief, a half-worn-out thimble, a flat purse, would emit a divine fluid which would touch certain cells of her brain, making her indifferent to the scolding of her mistress and to all the worries of the workroom, drawing her out of her gangue of poverty and transporting her into a heavenly zone. And then, the day would perhaps come when these same little black letters would lose their magic and become less precious than the coarse handkerchief, the half-worn-out thimble and the flat purse, and there would be nothing but blackness in the heart and the pocket of the poor work-girl.

For the first time in my life, I had realised all the strangeness and wonder of this transmission of thought, love, feelings and impressions, by handwriting, and I admired it all most sincerely.

On returning to my hotel by the Rue d'Antin, I saw a little boy seated on the step of his father's shop. He had a slate on his knees and, with his tongue against his cheek, after the manner of his far back ancestor, perhaps, he was giving all his attention to forming letters, such as those of which I had just witnessed the power, and these letters, which transmit not only love, but life, now seemed to me as sacred as those of a divine

rite. This is what I call becoming conscious of things.

All this led my thoughts in the direction of that phenomenon which we call *literature*. We produce literature and do not know by what mechanism. It comes from us and escapes our senses in just the same way as the perfume would escape from the flower if that could see. Nothing seems to me more mysterious, and, by dint of thinking it out, I have arrived at a conception which is, perhaps, absurd, but I will give it. Many persons have to blunder along before one really finds the truth.

Like us, the Earth has a body and soul so closely united that it is impossible to know where the one ends and the other begins. Its body is an agglomeration of numberless molecules and cellules, animated by that absolutely unknown force, which we call vital force, and which is undoubtedly the radio-activity of the Eternal God. These molecules and these cellules incarnate a portion of the physical and psychical forces of the Universe. Under Divine action they have gathered together, separated, been transformed, and they have evolved and progressed. They have become oceans, mountains, rivers, plains, deserts; they have manufactured the habitation of man and man himself. And these molecules and these cellules are constantly making the Invisible and the Intangible. They are elaborating the soul of the Earth, that is, the psychical world, which our eye does not penetrate, but which is the real world, in which everything happens, everything takes place, in which spiritual forces, ideas, sentiments, passions, vices and virtues are fighting a fierce battle; a world into

which the gods are constantly flinging fresh elements and for which man is working with all his cellules.

Oh, those cellules of our motor! I cannot study their strange design without blinking and shuddering a little. It is so ugly and yet so fascinating: a groundwork of dark seeds, arranged concentrically; a clear egg-shaped space and, in the centre, a black speck, the nucleus! These nucleoli, I am told, contain the most vital part of our being: energy, heredity, terrible and consoling heredity, the secret of our destiny. Planted by the million, in the divine clay, in the fertile grey matter, they act on the network of our nerves, on the flow of our blood and on our organs, and they are indefatigable workers. They have been weaving the Wonderful Romance for millions of years. They create the most prodigious things, all the dreams of mankind and, among those dreams, that powerful factor, literature.

When the Terrestrian became aware of God, he addressed supplications, prayers and hymns to Him, and he also commenced that astonishing dialogue with God, in which, thanks to auto-suggestion, he asked the questions and gave the answers himself. It was in this way that sacred literature was born. After this, the Terrestrian began to sing of his combats and of his love; he made legends out of his childish dreams. His faculties gradually developed and he tried to copy life, to create dramas and fictitious idylls. This was the beginning of romantic literature. Later on, the mysteries of Nature attracted his attention and made him think, observe and wonder and, as a result of all this, philosophical literature made its appearance.

Literature, like music, is entirely psychical, much more so than painting and sculpture. Its invisible waves are held firm by writing, either in the manuscript or in the book. The eye sets them free again at will, and, coming as they have from the human brain, they return thither to work on it, influence it and make it produce other waves. This is a fine instance of Divine economy. These psychic waves contain superior and inferior elements. They carry along with them true and false ideas, elevated and low thoughts, noble and unworthy sentiments, pictures of great beauty and of vile ugliness. They carry along with them words which console, words which encourage, words which cause despair, words which vivify and words which kill. They bring the dead back into the midst of the living and keep their words and their souls for us. These psychic waves, by means of millions of instantaneous photographs, taken by the eye and the mind of the writer, transmit to us the most distant landscapes, give us the sensation of a beauty that we cannot see for ourselves. They enlarge our inner vision, renew and develop the soul of those who are chained down by some compulsory task. They snatch us away from our preoccupations, from our cares, take us out of ourselves, transport us to the earthly Beyond, just as though far-seeing Nature wanted to give us what the English describe as "a change." There are waves of poetry and waves of prose. The former are of a more rare essence; they have rhythm and cadence, they are able to lift certain souls higher; the others reach farther and have more universality. All the various waves of litera-

ture have gone on increasing in volume and in depth. Every race has enriched them. At present, they must form an enormous current, a sort of psychical Gulf Stream. They mingle and intermingle, but they never lose their own special characteristics. Like every different soul, they keep their own individuality. It is impossible to confuse Northern literature with that of the South, or that of the East with that of the West, the Dantesque waves with the Shakespearian ones. I imagine all these waves as glistening with colours and with extraordinary shades. Those of our present epoch of transition are most likely grey. Ah, yes, they must indeed be grey. The subjective ideal has been lived and lived over and over again. It can supply nothing more to poor writers. It is like a burnt out *ampoule*. Humanity has had enough of it, but still clings to it, by pure atavism, and also out of fear. It dare not let go of the hand which holds it a prisoner, but which has led it along for centuries. Some great crisis will accelerate its evolution. The discoveries of Science, which poets and novelists seem to disdain, just as theologians do, will turn its soul towards Nature, where the sources of true poetry, the secret of our origin and the hopes of our last days, are to be found.

One day, at the Place de la Comédie Française, I was a witness of the psychical action of romantic literature, and it was quite a revelation to me. The first time I knocked against Alfred de Musset's statue, for it is placed in such a way that one does knock against it, it gave me a shock and, on looking at it, I was furious. It seemed to me so ridiculous and it was placed in such

an unsuitable spot. "Posterity always does things in this way," I said to myself. "Thanks to its childish curiosity, it turns our great men out into the street. It had already done this for Alfred de Musset when it published his correspondence with George Sand." With these thoughts in my mind, I continued on my way, raging inwardly.

One morning, last Spring, I was again near this statue. I had never examined it thoroughly, as there was something about it that shocked me and made me feel ill at ease. Statues generally represent mere attitudes of the body, but this one reveals a state of mind, and a state of mind exposed in a public square seemed to me a profanation. I felt rather more courageous on the day in question, and I began to examine this figure that stands out in full relief. I saw a man with tired limbs, whose face expresses a grief that is morbid, that has neither manliness nor nobility about it — one of those griefs which one would want to hide and which ought to be hidden. And to this being, whose springs of life are evidently broken, a woman, with a theatrical gesture, is pointing to the door of the Comédie Française. This does not appear to console him in the least. The comic side of the conception drove my emotion away and made me smile. My eyes then fell on the lines from *La Nuit de Mai*, engraved on the socle of the statue and I felt rather ashamed of my irreverence:

"Rien ne nous rend si grands qu'une grande douleur . . .
Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux,
Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots."

I imagined and envied the special voluptuousness that the poet must have felt when he traced those lines, and more particularly the last one:

"Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots."

It is literature, of course, but how it reverberates in the ear and in the soul!

This statue, which takes up so much room, attracts the attention of the passers-by, and they all seem to be surprised when they look at it. Some of the people stand still and read the poetry. I was curious to see the various effects it would produce and I walked round it, as though studying it myself. A workman, wearing a white blouse, with a flabby cigarette in the corner of his mouth, and a gay, chaffing expression on his face, read out the celebrated lines to his companion. "Stuff and nonsense!" he observed, shrugging his shoulders, when he had finished. Two worthy women, coming out of the Louvre shops, with cardboard boxes and parcels in their hands, stopped and read the lines, but they did not appear to understand them at all. Quite a young man came next. He was of Southern type and looked as though he had not had enough to eat, but his face was interesting. With his hands buried in his pockets, he read the poet's words slowly, and then looked up at him, with an expression that seemed to ask whether he really believed that? He whistled as he moved away and, in the whistle, which was intended to be sceptical, I fancied that I distinguished a quiver of emotion. After him, came a woman of about fifty years of age. She was poorly dressed and looked faded and colour-

less, but there was a certain refinement about her face and her whole person. She looked like one of those women who are doomed to carry heavy burdens — burdens that are too heavy for them. She read the beautiful message in her turn and I saw a wonderful thing. Her face lighted up, her whole body drew itself up as though it had received a magnetic touch. She pressed the parcel she was carrying more closely against her, with a quick, nervous movement, and her ardent, misty eyes thanked the author of *La Nuit de Mai*. She then went on her way, with head erect and a firm step.

I had just caught the effect of the psychic waves of literature. I was moved to the very depths of my soul and I turned away myself murmuring: "Oh, God, I did not know it was so great."

It was certainly not impossible chance which had brought that woman there, but Providential Will. At that cross-roads, where streams of hard workers pass by every day, the miracle I had just witnessed takes place, perhaps, daily for some creature. I no longer think that the poet's statue is badly placed. I fancy that, on its footpath there, it is doing a fine piece of occult work in the way of consolation. This must be for Alfred de Musset a greater reward than entering the Comédie Française. I hope so, at any rate.

CHAPTER V

One would like to only have things of this kind to tell with regard to literature. If it can vivify, it can, alas, also kill. It has a great many crimes to answer for, and some of them are very great crimes. Was it not thanks to having read of the love of Guinevere and Lancelot, that Francesca de Rimini and her brother-in-law, Paul Malatesta, declared their mutual affection and were killed by Lanciotto, the husband? Dante meets the beautiful loving woman in the "City of Tears," and, with a marvellous intuition of Life, he makes her say: "When we read how the much desired, laughing lips were kissed by the lover, he, who will never more be separated from me (Paul Malatesta), kissed my lips. As far as we were concerned, the real culprits were the book and he who wrote it. That day we did not read what had gone before." Dante was right, and the book, in this case, was an agent of perdition.

Quite recently a young man I knew, who was rich and gifted, killed himself, as a result of having read too much of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Thanks to their suggestion, Life seemed to him to be merely a snare and a trap. One evening, after playing the death of Tristram and Iseult, that death, which is like a song of triumph, he overturned the cup which was full to the brim of wonderful wine. That is what literature has the power of doing.

About two years ago, a Roumanian woman came to call on me, and begged so hard that I would see her that I was obliged to consent. She was about fifty years of age, with clear-cut features. Her large, dark, sad-looking eyes and nervous nose gave a tragic expression to her face. She was elegantly dressed, but her hat was rather awry, her dress wrongly hooked and her jacket hanging loose. All this gave the idea of some mental worry. She apologised for her intrusion and then, in an abrupt, rather hard voice, she said:

"I have a son who is dying of consumption. He has read your books and has several times expressed a wish to see you and to talk to you. I would give a finger of my hand to satisfy any of his wishes, for we Roumanians are true mothers. When I heard that you were here, in Lausanne, I came at once to ask if you would consent to pay us a visit. Am I asking too much?"

"No, I will come willingly," I answered.

Madame X—— thanked me and, in order that I should understand the situation, she gave me various details with regard to her life.

"My husband behaved abominably," she said. "He was unfaithful to me under my very roof. I went straight away, taking my little boy, just as a cat carries its kitten off between its teeth. I watched over him jealously, and never even let him know of the existence of evil."

"That was a mistake," I said.

"Yes, it was a mistake," my visitor owned. "Like all young men, he wanted to complete his studies, as an engineer, in Paris. Paris is the terror of mothers in

our country. Our young men leave home, simple-minded and straightforward. They come back to us corrupted, and good for nothing else but deceiving women."

"Because they only frequent bad society in Paris," I said, by way of excuse.

"That may be, but the fact remains. Hoping to keep my boy out of the dangers that I suspected, I went with him to Paris. I made our home very comfortable and pleasant, so that he might receive his friends there, and I congratulated myself on my wisdom. For the first two years, I had no anxiety about him and then, suddenly, everything changed. A wretched woman, a married woman, robbed me of my only treasure. She dragged him off to that Dance of Death which, in your country, you call '*la fête.*' It is a fine *fête!* In a very short time, neither his mother, nor his own country, existed for him. He forgot all his dreams and ambitions, everything but this woman. Ah, if you only knew how many sleepless nights I passed at the window of our flat, in the Rue Pierre Charron, watching for him until daylight appeared. Very often daylight came without bringing him back to me. This went on for ten months and you will see what ten months did for the finest looking young man it was possible to find."

The poor mother's voice gave way and her lips were contorted with anguish.

"Oh, but with all the care you will lavish on him, and with the vivifying air of this country, you will be able to restore him to health," I said.

"Alas, I can only prolong his life a little and make it rather more endurable. That daughter of Satan must have poisoned him, for there has never been consumption either in my family or in that of my husband."

"Does he know what a state he is in?" I asked.

"Oh, he must know it, at times, but he does not own it to me. We are both pretending to be quite hopeful. When tears are very near and I am afraid of them betraying me, I look up at the ceiling quickly. I have discovered this mechanical method of driving them back. I did not want my boy to have all the horrors of the sanatorium. I have rented a house that is well sheltered, up on the heights. It is surrounded with fir-trees and there is a wonderful view. My boy's foster-brother has just taken his degree as a doctor and he is with us, helping me to nurse my son." Madame X—— was silent for a few seconds and then, clenching her hands together violently, she continued:

"I ought to have brought him here earlier. When I meet the students here in Lausanne, radiant with health, I am horribly jealous, and I feel the most terrible remorse."

"Do not be remorseful," I said; "remember you have only done as God willed."

A flash of anger lighted up the eyes of the Roumanian woman.

"Then God is cruel!" she said resentfully.

"No, that is impossible!" I exclaimed, with all the force of my sincere conviction. "Cruelty is only possible with inferior beings."

"Come to my home, and you will see for yourself," said Madame X—— bitterly. "'The Firs' is some distance away though," she continued; "half an hour by train and then an up-hill walk of ten minutes. Are you not afraid?"

"Not in the least," I answered. "I can climb very well. Tell your son that I will pay him a visit to-morrow."

The following day I went to "The Firs." The house was in an ideal spot and its huge Swiss roof gave it a home-like look. It had a fir-wood as its background and, for horizon, the Lake and the Alps. When I saw Madame X——'s son, I felt a pang at my heart. He was undoubtedly dying — and dying at the age of twenty-six. He was handsome, with the Latin type of features; his nose was slightly arched and his eyes luminous and velvety, like those of an Oriental. His complexion had not the transparency of the consumptive patient: it was like wax and perfectly livid in places. His thick hair seemed to be glued down by cold perspiration. I saw before me a human creature that Nature was destroying, with all the rapidity of the very end. On seeing me, the poor boy blushed, as much as his pale face could blush, and his eyelids quivered. The blush, the quivering eyelids and the eyes avoiding mine, betrayed instinctive shame, that physical shame that I have more than once surprised in men when they feel themselves disabled.

He bowed very low on taking my hand, but did not kiss it, and thanked me, timidly, for coming to see him.

I endeavoured to put him at his ease and succeeded in this. A less timid look gradually came into his eyes, and I saw in them the light of his very soul. In a few minutes, we were old friends. Whilst talking to him, my eyes took in the beautiful surroundings in the midst of which this intensely painful scene was being enacted. The ground floor of the house had high ceilings and a verandah, with glass only at the two sides. This verandah was like a huge room opening longways on to a landscape which was a perfect dream. There was a sofa, the invalid's reading chair, a collection of books and mountain plants. I also noticed Madame X——'s work-basket and a chess-board with the chess-men set ready for a fight. In front of the verandah was a living carpet of simple flowers, all growing in luxurious profusion. To the right and left of the avenue of trees, meadows stretched away all along the side of the slope. In one of these meadows, a cow was grazing and six black and white goats. The air came to us pure and vivifying and the sun bathed us in its rays. I was surprised to think that all these beneficent forces should not win the day over the homicidal forces, the odious work of which I could see for myself.

Towards four o'clock, the young doctor, M. Adamovitch, arrived. There was more of the Slavonic than the Latin race about him, and his expression was both bright and serene. The way he shook hands expressed the grief that he felt. He whistled for the goats at once, and they came bounding up and climbed the stone

steps of the verandah. The cook milked one of them and the invalid gave them a few handfuls of salt in exchange for his cup of foamy milk.

"Do you see their little silver bells?" he said, smiling. "The cow wears them as well, and each one gives a note of the scale, so that when they all shake their bells, we have the funniest little airs."

The tea-table was brought and the singing of the samovar enlivened us. Our conversation became general, and I soon saw the treatment M. Adamovitch was trying with his foster-brother. He interested him in all the questions of the day and kept him in touch with all that went on, just as one tries to keep the head of a drowning man above water. He did not want his patient to feel outside things, as it were. All that he said gave proof of an amazing knowledge of human nature, and it was very evident to me that he was doing his utmost to encourage the young man to be hopeful. He would make fun of him now and then, in a most charming way, whilst his beautiful dark, dog-like eyes beamed on him with affection. I noticed, though, that the invalid kept drawing out of the general conversation. He watched me with a curious expression, and his eyes, when they met mine, had a questioning look in them. I felt the appeal of his mind magnetically, and I answered with a smile that meant we would have a quiet talk together.

An hour later, laden with flowers, I was on my way to the station, accompanied by M. Adamovitch.

"You see how things are?" he asked, in a voice, hoarse with deep feeling.

"Is there no hope?"

"None. Directly we think we have gained ground, it is always the vile bacilli who have gained it instead of us. And to think that there are idiots drivelling out their lives, and shapeless creatures in good health, whilst this one, well built and richly gifted, must die. Nature certainly makes strange selections!"

"Perhaps the selection is being made for another world," I suggested.

A smile played over the young doctor's face.

"Perhaps," he said. "At any rate it proves the existence of laws that we do not know. We know nothing, nothing at all," he added, emphasising his words in a sorrowful way.

I had promised to go to "The Firs" again and, of course, I went again. On my second visit I found the young man better.

He was wearing a dark red, silk coat with Oriental embroidery, and a shirt of cream surah. A dark fur was thrown over his shoulders and this set off his handsome face and showed up, alas, the ravages of the work of destruction that was going on.

After a short time, Madame X—— went out into the garden, under the pretext of gathering some flowers for me.

"You know that we Roumanians are Latin, do you not?" asked the invalid, directly we were alone. "I mean that we are authentic Romans."

"Yes, you are the descendants of the colony that Trajan established round one of the bends of the Danube. I knew this in a vague way and then, thanks

to one of those mysterious combinations with which our lives are made up, I have for the last two years been brought into contact with a number of Roumanians. They have literally invaded my orbit."

"And even my mother joined in pursuing you."

"And I am very grateful to her for it," I remarked.

"And I am, too, I can assure you," said the young man fervently.

"I was not long in recognising in you Roumanians the Latin soul, mingled, though, with certain Slavonic characteristics. This mixture was revealed to me very clearly by *Le Rhapsode de la Dambovita*, a collection of ballads and folk-songs which Hélène Vacaresco has given us."

An expression of keen pleasure lighted up my young host's face.

"You liked them, I hope?"

"Liked them? I have never read anything so beautiful. Last Autumn, one of your compatriots, who was quite a stranger to me, left a volume and a letter for me, at my hotel. In the letter she asked me, in an almost commanding way, to read the volume, so that I might learn to know the Roumanian soul. The calmness of the proceeding annoyed me and my first impulse was to return the book to its sender, but my first impulses are always the wrong ones. The following morning, when I woke, which is always the moment when I am at my best, I opened the volume, simply by way of having a clear conscience. My eyes fell on the following lines:

"Le maïs s'est penché vers la terre,
"La plaine, sa mère, l'a senti,
"La plaine s'en est effrayée,
"Pourquoi te penches-tu *sans que le vent souffle?*
"Maïs, mon enfant fier!

The soul which these words revealed appealed to me immediately. I went on reading and my admiration increased as I read. I was positively startled by the simple way in which these folk-song writers make Mother Earth talk in their ballads. They make the stars talk, the elements, the living and the dead, and they make them say such wonderful things, things which give, to an incredible degree, the sensation of our union with all Nature, the sensation of a very near Beyond, where all those who have been called back from Earth are now living. And that is Slavonic, is it not?"

"It is indeed."

"Hélène Vacaresco tells us that girls improvise and sing these ballads whilst weaving. Is that really possible?"

"Certainly. And the girl who forgets the words, or is not inspired to improvise the next lines, throws her spindle to one of the others, and the ballad continues, or is entirely transformed, thanks to evocations which bear no relation to the first part of the story."

"Well, that certainly goes to prove, in the most striking manner, the existence of those currents of higher life which frequently pass through simple minds: causing them to give utterance to words of which they have

felt the infinite sweetness, the hope and the consolation, but of which they do not understand the real meaning. And these currents of inspiration frequently give extraordinary intuitions. Take, for instance, the song of the Cobzar, who says:

Aime-moi, parce que j'ai besoin de ton amour pour mes chansons,
Va-t-en, parce que j'ai besoin de pleurer pour mes chansons,
Meurs, parce que j'ai besoin de chanter la mort pour mes chansons,
Car je suis le Cobzar.*

How should that Roumanian peasant know that the love, the tears and the grief of the poet must serve in the weaving of his work, the work that belongs to Universal Life? "

"Yes, indeed, it does really seem miraculous. Did you read *The Song of the Faithless One?* "

"Yes, it is one of the finest things I know on the subject of love and, from a psychical point of view, there is a depth of feeling in it that is marvellous."

"I am like our peasants; I feel the charm of our songs, but I have never comprehended them."

"You will comprehend them later on."

"Later on? " repeated the invalid with an attempt at a smile.

"Yes, later on," I said, as though not understanding him, "and you must read them with your mind, for they

* Love me, for I need thy love for my songs.
Leave me, I need to weep for my songs,
Die, for I need to sing of Death in my songs,
For I am the Cobzar.

contain revelations which make them almost sacred poems. Are not those words of a dead mother a revelation?

> Je lui ai demandé aussi: "Petite mère
> Que disent les morts en songeant aux vivants?"
> Et elle m'a répondu: "Ils ont pitié." *

That must be true."

"You think so?"

"I do think so."

"So much the better," said the doomed young man in an ironical tone, the suffering in which I felt.

"I assure you," I continued, "that I am most grateful to Hélène Vacaresco for having translated these Folk-songs for us. Just a few weeks after reading them, I received some post-cards that would have served admirably for illustrating them. They came to me from Bucharest, from a person unknown to me. One of these cards represented two girls with very Latin, or I might say Roman, faces. They were of the peasant class and they were chattering together near a well. They looked as though they were waiting there for 'the one who was to come.' They were wearing the embroidered chemise and sash which are their pride, as the work of their own fingers. All their feminine vanity seems to be concentrated in this handiwork of theirs. Another card represented the cobzar near the fountain, singing for the benefit of those who came to fetch water for their household. You see, I was destined to know something about

* I said to her too: "Mother dear,
What do the dead say when they think of the living?"
She answered me: "They pity them."

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your country, as books never come into our hands by chance."

To my great surprise, my words brought a slight flush to the invalid's face and he gave a short, discordant laugh.

"Do you know what I am dying of?" he asked.

"In the first place, I do not think you are in a dying state," I answered in a light tone.

"Oh, yes, you do," he insisted, "and so do I. Well, I am dying of the effects of a book."

"Of a book?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. Up to the age of twenty-three, I had lived a regular life, thanks to the way my mother had brought me up, and also thanks to the affection I had for a young cousin of mine. One day, whilst I was finishing my studies in Paris, one of my Roumanian friends invited me to dinner at a restaurant. He was to bring his mistress with him, a strumpet whom he had taken up and of whom he was very proud. I was to call for him at half past seven. I arrived punctually, but he had not come in. His man-servant showed me into his study. I lighted a cigarette and then, seeing an open book on the divan, I picked it up and began to read the page at which it was open. It was one of those vile books that might have been written by the apes for apes. My first impression was one of instinctive disgust and I threw the book down on a table near. You understand, I flung it away as though it were an infectious thing and a little while after," added the young man, flushing again, "I picked it up again. I opened it, and a certain phrase, on one of the pages, went to my

head like the most intoxicating wine. You do not mind hearing all, do you?" he asked.

"No, for I shall understand all then."

He repeated the phrase to me and I saw, with horror, that it still affected him.

"It was that phrase, which made my blood flame just as punch does, that was the cause of everything. When my friend returned, the die had already been cast, as far as I was concerned. Our dinner was not particularly gay. Just as we were finishing, the door of the private room my friend had engaged at the restaurant opened, and a befeathered head appeared. That head affected me like an electric shock.

"'Can I come in?' asked the girl.

"'You can,' replied my host.

"She came in and told us that she had been dining with a South American, but that she had left him, as he was too stupid and did not even understand drinking wine. If I had been myself that night, I should have felt nothing but disgust for this woman, for I was young enough to have dreams of fair-haired girls with stainless reputations. She was tall and very thin. With her black hair and red lips, her face made me think of hell, whilst her big, long-shaped eyes were like a scrap of heaven. All that sounds like a phrase taken from a novel," said the young man with a little smile, "but it was just the impression that this vivid black, red and blue gave me. It seemed to me that the heroine of the novel I had been reading was there in person, and she could very well have pronounced the wild words that had struck me so forcibly. We finished our evening at

the theatre and she went with us. She saw what a simple-minded innocent I was. She tried to astound me and she certainly succeeded." The young man wiped his moist forehead as he spoke. "She succeeded so well," he continued, "that she made a perfect fool and idiot of me. She was ill, consumptive to her very marrow, but the little provision of life that remained to her was flaming with desire and passion. She led me on to all kinds of excesses. She tortured me frightfully, but I think she really loved me a little. She died a year ago and I am the only one whose forgiveness she asked. She is dead and you see me now—" A fit of coughing punctuated his last words and made them tragic.

"That woman," he continued, as soon as he could speak again, "was not only a harlot but a veritable *glu*, and I am like the poor fellow of Richepin's song. Like him, I have killed my mother, torn her heart out—"

"No, no, do not exaggerate things," I said. "It is only in very rare cases that mothers do not suffer in this way through their sons. Your mother is very happy now that she has won you back, and I am quite sure that she is revelling in a kind of maternal voluptuousness whilst she is working to restore you to health."

"Perhaps so, but I can see now all the harm that I have done her by my mad folly. I have ruined her health and destroyed her beauty. Her hair has turned white and there are rings round her eyes that tell of suffering. My remorse is terrible and I keep wondering how I could have acted as I did. How could I?"

repeated the young man, clenching the arms of his couch with his hands.

"You have simply lived the life that was your destiny," I said.

"Ah, yes, yes, that is it, is it not? I feel a certain relief, in remembering that I was not accountable for the various circumstances that made a criminal of me. I was caught in a snare. I should never have seen the book that led to my damnation if my friend had not bought it, and if he had not been kept at his club playing bridge. Then, too, the book was open at the right place," continued the young man, with bitter irony. "Should you call that providential?"

"Certainly," I said.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, horrified at this idea.

"By Providence, I mean all the divine powers which govern us. Providence does not only arrange our affairs for us; its mission is, very frequently, to upset everything. It is just as apt to break the rung of the ladder under our feet, as to join together the one that is broken, and it has its reasons for breaking or for mending each rung."

"I certainly do not believe in human liberty, for, as soon as one begins to study the physical laws of Nature, it is impossible to believe in this; but, according to your theory, the ills with which we are beset, and we certainly are beset by them," he added bitterly, "are punishments."

"No, because those who are good, the very best even, and the poor innocent animals, have their share of the ills."

"And the biggest share, too, very frequently —"

"Besides which," I put in, "we are so closely bound together, the great and little of the Universe, the poor and the rich, that the guilty could never be punished without the innocent suffering."

"You are right. If, for instance, my illness and my death were my punishment, it is a punishment which will be felt more cruelly by my mother and my friend."

"And then, we are not punished, but merely worked upon. And that is quite sufficient."

"Yes, it certainly is — quite sufficient."

"The other day," I continued, "in St. John's Gospel, I came across the most consoling revelation. It was, perhaps, so that I should give it to you. When Jesus was confronted with the man who had been born blind, one of his disciples asked him: 'Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; *but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*'"

"Ah! It does one good to hear that!" said the young man with a sigh of relief.

"Jesus believed in his own mission. He knew that he was to die by crucifixion, in order to carry out a plan of Providence. It is that which makes his Passion so tragical. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he said: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' And then he added: 'O my Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me.' And it was not possible. We can see that, for it contained the elements of the colossal work of religious evolution which

was to be carried on. And, in the same way, the cup of bitterness is ever presented to the lips of all humanity and humanity has repeated the prayer of Jesus, and always in vain. This cup must be absorbed, because there are, no doubt, germs of progress and of future happiness in it."

"Ah, Madame, what an optimist you are!" said the young man with a faint smile. "I guessed that you were when I read your books and that was why I so much wanted to have a talk with you. Tell me, was it thanks to religion or science that you came to believe in the future?"

"Neither thanks to the one nor to the other. I have neither enough religious faith nor enough knowledge. It is thanks to mere common sense that I believe as I do. Common sense frequently leads us to conclusions that are more exact than those arrived at by science. Common sense showed me that if we began with our birth and finished with our death, we should have no meaning whatever, and beings or things without meaning could not exist."

"You are right there."

"Can you conceive of a single particle of a whole that is immortal being annihilated?"

"No, it is inadmissible."

"Well, then, the essence of Life, which is the radioactivity of God, must confer immortality on the molecule that it creates. It gives movement to this, and movement means progress, evolutions and infinite transformations."

"Certainly."

"At my age, you see, one has a long past behind one, a very short present and the future is beyond the wall of doom which bars the way for all of us. During these last years, I have tried, by means of thought, to get up a little higher, to make myself a pair of intellectual stilts, in order to be able to see over on to the other side of the wall. My stilts, alas, were not high enough. I was only able to see gleams of light, but these gleams of light permitted me to conceive of something very consoling and very beautiful."

"Something consoling and beautiful," repeated the young man, leaning forward eagerly. "Oh, tell me, tell me what it is," he continued, with an intonation which revealed his ardent desire to have more hope.

I looked at his emaciated face, at his eyes shining with mortal feverishness and I hesitated. Would my conception of this world and the other one reconcile this poor doomed creature to his fate? It was an experiment which tempted me.

"You will not make fun of my dreams?" I asked, by way of gaining time.

"Make fun? God forbid!"

"Well, then, I believe in the existence of numberless hierarchies, of higher beings, of those beings whom theologians call Angels, Archangels, Powers, Dominations. The Bible, in certain of the Psalms, speaks of them as gods and we call them Nature and Providence. I do not see them inactive, in ecstatic dreams, nor yet spending all their time in singing the praises of the Eternal God. I see them serving, struggling, fighting for and with God. They appear to me as the chiefs

of His celestial armies, His initiated ones, His transmitters, His agents, the makers of the worlds which are scattered through the Universe like grains of sand. I see them capturing the nebulæ, in which the Supreme Creator has enclosed all the physical and psychical energies. I see them developing these germs in thousands of different forms, and leading them on towards more and more perfect conditions. Their first creations, for instance, were monstrous. The ancestor of man was not the fine Adam of the legend. He had a flattened cranium, and under this cranium a wretched little, primitive motor, just as our first automobiles had: his jaws were made for crunching bones and tearing flesh, his arms were huge and capable of mortal hugs. By means of one deluge after another, the gods evidently wanted to get rid of these crude specimens, just as the child wipes from his slate the drawings which do not satisfy him. The progress of these gods has marked our progress; when they had learnt something, they taught us. Our progress has been obtained by means of continual struggle, by desperate efforts on their part as well as on ours. With us, and by means of us, they have experienced the joy of victory and the bitterness of defeat. Just imagine all that has taken place from the time when, by striking together two pieces of different woods, the first spark of fire was obtained and the time when, by the contact of two different metals, the first spark of electricity was obtained. Is it not marvellous to think that we are now able to read, from the stone, the history of the earliest days of humanity?"

"It is miraculous even."

"What divine pleasures these Powers must feel in playing the great game of Life, in creating races, nations, empires!"

"Yes, and in preparing their decadence!"

"Of course, because they know that on falling to pieces, things produce fresh radiations."

"Ah, your optimism is of a robust kind," said the young man, smiling. "And are there any goddesses for your gods of this Earth?" he added rather mockingly.

"Certainly, the feminine element must exist throughout the Universe. It is quite easy to recognise this element in certain creations."

"And what form do you think these Higher Beings have?"

"Only a poet who is a great genius could imagine that," I answered. "I think they have a body, though, as the body is the servant of the soul."

"More often the master of the soul," murmured the young man, looking down.

"With men, yes," I agreed; "but the gods, probably, know how to hold it in hand. Then, too, according to the Gospel, they have glorious bodies. I do not know exactly what that means, but it gives the idea of physical and psychical beauty. The Holy Book is full of these unexpected gems of expression. They probably undergo that transformation which we call death, just as we do. I imagine too, that there must be a flora and fauna peculiar to their regions; and cities, temples and palaces, of which ours are only feeble re-

productions. Shall I tell you, too, how I imagine these gods occupied?"

"Yes, by all means."

"Well, I always see them in front of tables of harmony, divine claviers. I see them directing their struggle and ours, by means of psychical currents, sending waves of thought, of ideas, sentiments and inspirations over our planet. It is the remembrance of a simple professor of a little Umbrian town, whom I used to know, which created this picture for me. His name was Dini and I always enjoy thinking of him, as he was a seeker after truth. People said he was crazy, but so many wise men have been taken for mad ones, and so many fools have been taken for wise men. This Dini maintained that every creature gave out a musical phrase and that every event did too. He had put all that he knew into music and had written many pamphlets exposing his theories. I often wondered whether there were not a great, intuitive truth in his philosophy. I am now going to confess to you a private impression of mine which seems to me curious. I have the most profound and, if I dared I would say, loving adoration for the God whom I cannot conceive. I feel His *existence* within me. As regards Providence, I feel nothing of this adoration."

"Perhaps it is because you have a certain conception of Providence."

"Perhaps that is it," I assented, somewhat surprised at the subtlety of the reason suggested. "I have never been on good terms with Providence. When I have felt the bit and the stirrup, I have always reared. At pres-

ent even, although I know that Providence is not free, when the newspapers are full of calamities, I never fail to reproach Providence vehemently."

"Do you mean to say that you think all events, political and others, are the work of the gods?"

"Certainly I do, and if you read your newspaper with this idea in your mind, you will see how interesting it will all seem. It is all *divine copy*. That sounds odd, does it not, but is the epopee of the Earth anything else?"

"Does not your conception make mere puppets of us?"

"Not puppets, but soldiers, disciples, initiated ones and initiators, creatures who learn *to put things together in a perfect way*, just as in that game of 'puzzles' which is so much in favour at present. The engineer learns the art of combining forces, the architect the art of building, of guiding the work of many hands; geometricians and mathematicians study the science of figures and of numbers. Chemists study the play of molecules, their composition and decomposition. Doctors study the structure of the human body and are employed in mending it and sometimes in curing it. Kings and statesmen are learning the art of leading the masses and of maintaining order amongst them. The novelist does something which is still more extraordinary and more significant. He creates fictitious beings, veritable marionettes, the elements of which he finds in the lobes of his brain. He elaborates happy or unhappy destinies for them, makes them talk and act, and makes them so living that their words and deeds affect

beings of flesh and blood, animated beings. Does it not seem to you, from the instances I have given, that we are all learning our business as future gods?"

"Yes, it does seem like it."

"We, in our turn, shall be makers of worlds. Have you not noticed that man's favourite plaything is the ball, a *little globe?* I see in that a symbol and a promise."

"Oh!" protested the invalid, smiling.

"Yes, indeed," I persisted. "We shall learn to know the divine work more thoroughly, we shall know the enjoyment of handling the infinitely great things, such as love, hatred, ambition, patriotism and heroism and the infinitely small things too, which are just as formidable; vanity for instance, snobbishness and so many, many other things."

Whilst giving my conception of our Hereafter, I had watched the effect of my words on the invalid's face and, to my intense satisfaction, I saw that his expression became more gentle and that his face lighted up with hope.

"Ah, you will reconcile me with Death," he said, with a smile suggestive of youthfulness.

"Death is in Life and Life is in Death," I continued. "They are only transformations."

"You believe in reincarnations then?"

"Certainly I do."

"Ah, so much the better," said the young man, with a sigh of relief. "Adamovitch and I have often discussed this probability, and, after each of our discussions, this has seemed to be more clear, more compati-

ble with divine justice. We have never been able to convince my mother, though. She is afraid of losing her son more completely," he added, with an expression in his eyes which seemed to ask me for a contradiction.

"One might say that 'women have reasons of which reason is ignorant,'" I said. "The bonds which unite us and which group us together may change without being broken. In a great love, or a great friendship, there is, perhaps, an infinite number of sentiments. It cannot be created all at once. If reincarnation did not exist, man, for the simple reason of having dreamed of it, would be better than God and that is not possible. Do you know what I think? Nature, which is the supreme poet, only created Death for the sake of surrounding our successive transformations with sacred mystery."

"Are you not inventing all this for my sake?" asked the young man, clasping his pale hands together.

"No, I assure you I am not. For a long time this idea has haunted my mind. You must agree that it would not have been easy for us to change our bodies here on earth. When the gods have taken away any Terrestrian, they have always wrapped themselves in clouds. I do not believe in the astral promenades of the theosophical dream or of that of the spiritists. Transmissions must take place without any break in the continuity. I am afraid the novelist ignores the philosopher here," I added, smiling. "Do you think my dream quite impossible?"

"It seems to me that it is only too beautiful, and how far off our apotheosis is!"

"That does not matter, for time does not exist in eternity and we are already in eternity. The Earth was in it from the very day that it was conceived by the Eternal God."

"In eternity!" The young man's eyes reflected his thoughts. "It is quite possible," he continued, speaking very slowly, "that we are in eternity."

"It is even quite sure?" I put in. "We have existed, no doubt, for millions of years. How many atavisms and how many generations must have been needed for Cæsar to be a legislator, an orator, a warrior and a writer; for Michael Angelo to be a painter, a sculptor and a poet, and for Leonardo da Vinci to be a painter, a geometrician and a mathematician!"

"I wonder whether the day will come when we shall be conscious of these stages?" suggested the invalid.

"Oh, yes, when we are fit for the consciousness, when we can look at this long ladder of progression without turning dizzy. The plant, the animal and man are all gradually developing. The soul of the plant, which at present has only veins and sap, will have cerebral cellules, nerves and blood; the soul of the animal will have eyes that will be able to see heaven; the soul of man will have a glorious body. This conception is very childish, perhaps, and even barbarous, but it must come somewhere near the truth, as it would explain the inequality of conditions and destinies, an inequality which exists among the animals, just as it does among us, and it would satisfy, to a certain extent, our sense of justice."

The young man nodded his approval and I continued:

"All creatures are elaborating their own individual soul and a higher life. People say that when the gods created the moth-worm, they wanted to reveal this future to us; but we cannot yet understand their revelations. In Rome, when any one dies, the common people say: '*Si sfarfallata.*'—'He has pierced through his cocoon.'"

"What a pretty idea!"

"Yes, is it not? The day when Pius IX died, I heard a good woman say to another: ''E dunque si sfarfallato il Papa?'—'And so the Pope has pierced his cocoon!' It was sublime as regards intuition, but it was a droll idea, that of a Pope becoming a moth or a butterfly. And yet, it must be like that, we are all making wings for ourselves—"

"Ah, if I could only share your faith and confidence!" exclaimed the young man, clasping his hands together in a gesture of prayer.

"All that will come if you will only think about Life a little."

"Think about Life! That is just what I do all the time and the more I think about it, the less I understand it."

"What are you reading now?"

"Travels."

"That is all very well, but there is something better. Will you promise to read a book that I recommend?"

"Yes, I will certainly read it."

"Well then, get a copy of *Les Souvenirs Entomologiques d'Henri Fabre.* He is considered the greatest naturalist in the world. He is nearly eighty and, for half a century, he has been studying insects. The observations that he has given to science are treasures that no money could buy, and he is poorer than a workman. France, I am sorry to say, does not know how to reward its servitors, nor how to help its searchers after truth. It is only generous in monuments and statues. England and America would have lavished honours and money on a man like Henri Fabre, and he would have been able to procure the various instruments that he needed for his studies. With the most primitive of tools, though, with his own poor eyes, he has revealed to us something of the profoundness of Life. If you read *Les Souvenirs Entomologiques,* you will believe in our past and in our future. I will bring you *Les Beaux Dimanches* by Dr. Bourget. It is a book that is both simple and clever, and it will have the same effect on you as a purifying bath."

"I will read both books. The state of grace of which you have frequently spoken has never been given to me, but I am convinced that your visit is a providential one."

"Yes, certainly, and for me, too, it has been providential. By explaining to you my convictions, I have made things more clear to my own mind. Without suspecting it, I was doing double work! Is not that wonderful?"

My companion nodded slowly.

"And it is more wonderful still as regards the insects," I added, smiling.

Just at this moment, Madame X—— returned from the garden with a whole sheaf of early chrysanthemums. She gazed eagerly at her son's face and, on seeing him serene and happy, she thanked me with eyes shining with unshed tears. When I came away, the young man clasped my hand with an expression of touching gratitude. I raised it impulsively to his lips and their contact, so cold already, made me shiver through and through, but a beautiful look of gratitude came into his eyes.

Before very long I went again to "The Firs," as I wanted to judge of the effect of the books I had prescribed. I met Dr. Adamovitch in the tram, and he told me at once that my inspiration had been a happy one in advising his patient to read *Les Souvenirs Entomologiques*.

"They have taken him out of himself," he added. "He thinks of nothing but insects at present, and he is delighted at the thought of talking things over with you."

The invalid saw me from the verandah and waved the volume he was holding, in quite a youthful way. He came forward to meet me and his whole body, and the expression of his face, seemed to be animated by fresh thoughts.

"Ah," he said, after shaking hands, "without you I should have known nothing of the real profoundness of Life."

"You might say without Henri Fabre."

"Yes, and I cannot tell you what admiration I now

have for him. As soon as I am able to travel, I shall go and pay my respects to him."

His mother's eyelids quivered on hearing this plan, which she knew could never be carried out. As we took our seats at the tea-table, she said to me, with one of her heroic smiles:

"You know, we dare not kill an insect now. I little thought, any more than Andros did, that they were such wonders!"

"Natural History is the divine book, *par excellence*," I replied. "It contains the true Revelation and so few people read it. It ought to be within reach of every child. It would be a source of amusement and interest. It would teach children to *see*, to observe the flight of the bird, the work of insects, the life of plants. It would teach the child, above everything else, that there are other things in the world beside himself, the future man, and it would help him to know God by something visible and tangible. God would not seem so far away, but just as He is, quite, quite near to us!"

"And yet," put in Monsieur Adamovitch, "the majority of men of science have no kind of religion. How do you account for that?"

"In a very simple way. What they discover in the Heavens, in the depths of the Ocean and of the Earth, makes them believe in the absolute falseness of these metaphysical dreams which are our religions. They disdain them and they are wrong in this, for these wonderful dreams, which are so touching, although very far from the truth, are full of intuitions and divine

inspirations. There are symbols within them which might explain many things. Men of science are only doing the work of artisans. They are seeking, classifying, translating divine manuscripts, without understanding the revelation that is within them. Thinkers and poets will be born though, some day, who will unveil for us the true sense of things and who will show us the real soul."

"Ah, if they would only come!" exclaimed the doctor. "We need the truth, for we are saturated with fables and lies!"

"They will come," I continued. "A few days ago, I read a little poem called *The Grasshopper*, which delighted me. It seemed like the first fruit of the evolution which has commenced. It was the birth of the grasshopper which inspired the poem. It shows the work of Nature and the most beautiful hope emanates from this work. I am only sorry to have forgotten the author's name."

"It appears that in the schools now, in France, it is forbidden to speak of God," said Madame X——. "Do you not think that this is a sign of decadence?"

"Of evolution only, I hope. I think it is not unwise that the teaching of religious doctrine should be left to clergymen or priests, but I think it is grotesquely stupid, and even criminal, that teachers should not turn the thoughts, love and admiration of the child towards the Being from whom we all emanate and whose works they are explaining from morning to night. They obliterate the religious sentiment in the newcomers, and this sentiment, if rightly understood, might

do much towards elevating their minds and their hearts. The force of which they deprive their pupils might take them upwards, and they certainly have not the right to do this. One day in Paris, I was passing by the Madeleine with a friend who has no religious faith whatever. A first communion service had just been held, and the communicants were leaving the church. 'Do you know,' said my friend, stopping short, 'I cannot forgive my father for having deprived me of the emotion that those ridiculous boys, with white badges on their arms, have just felt. My father wished me to be free to choose my own religion, and I did not choose any at all!' For my part, I should like to see the name of God in gold letters on all our public buildings, and His name evoked in all our public assemblies and fêtes. He alone can give dignity to our acts and some prestige to our poor habitations which are so near the ground."

"The greatest nations are the most religious ones," put in Monsieur Adamovitch. "Look at England, for instance."

"The English have religious sentiment," I said. "It can be felt in their poetry which is so elevated, and in their hymns, which are so touching, and so manly. The French have only religion itself, but they have much more than foreigners think, and much more than they themselves think they have. Most of them, though, cannot separate God from the Church and its doctrines and practices. The anti-clericals consider God as essentially ecclesiastical and anti-republican even. It is for that reason that they reject Him. If

there were some thinkers, and some courageous thinkers among the teaching staff, they would write at the bottom of the photographic slides which reveal the wonders of Nature: 'The Author, God!' They would capture, as the Church does, and better still than the Church, that immense force and this laicised God would have the most fervent adorers."

"But perhaps the Church would not approve," said the invalid, smiling.

"That is very likely. The hostility that foreigners take for impiety is only a question of politics. The Catholic Church is essentially Roman. In its early days it had dreamed of being a Christian Republic, it had even taken the name of Republic, which was so dear to the Roman people. It became a theocracy though, and the Republic remained laical. The Church dominated Emperors and Kings, but it has always beaten a retreat when confronted by that intangible force, *the public, res publica.* The two rival powers are enemies; they have the same unyieldingness, the same tyranny, the same ambition, that of universalness. The Catholic Church little thinks how republican it really is, just as the Republic little thinks how much of the Roman Church it has about it. Between these two powers, the struggle has been both childish and barbarous. The Republican government has taken away from the French the sacred privilege of liberty of conscience, a privilege which is respected in all civilised States. France does not deserve this insult. Nature has not yet given us either the priest, the healer or the republican. As for the priest, we have

only ecclesiastics; instead of the healer, we have professors and doctors; and instead of the Republican we have men of different parties. When these three great human unities are once created, we shall all be happier. In the meantime, politics are one of the cruel agents of the struggle in which we have to participate, the struggle which begins very low down in the scale of beings, as you have seen when reading *Souvenirs Entomologiques.*"

"Yes," said the young man with a bright look on his face, "and man's struggle now seems to me merely the extension and development of the struggle of the insect. The latter is born with the tools of the working mason, carpenter or moulder; it is provided with weapons of attack and defence. Man is obliged to make these for himself."

"Fortunately for us," I exclaimed. "We are not very beautiful, but just imagine what we should be like if we were ornamented with all these implements: the mason with his trowel, the warrior with his darts and his lances."

"And the writer with his pen," added the young man, gaily.

We all laughed at the picture suggested to our minds.

"What patience an entomologist must require to be able to explain, as Henri Fabre does, all that the running backwards and forwards of a beetle means. When I was reading his book, I wondered whether invisible eyes were not gazing into our human cities and studying our lives in the same way."

"I had the same idea."

"What is very clear, thanks to the observations of your naturalist of Languedoc," put in the Doctor, "is the forethought of Nature for the preservation of the species. These hatching rooms, all varnished, aired and quite hygienic, which the insect prepares for a wretched little larva! It is amazing! And then to think that man does not know how to do the same thing for his progeny, and that thousands of children die, thanks to the ignorance of their parents. It is perfectly stupefying, for, if a mere larva is valuable in the universe, ought we not to be a thousand times more valuable still?"

"We are, you may be sure of that. The Terrestrian has to learn everything; it is in that very fact that his superiority lies."

"Andros read us the part about the love affairs of the scorpions," said Madame X——. "We found it most entertaining and touching. It is a pity that they end in such a tragic way. The scorpion wife eats her husband. Just think of it!"

"Well, he had become useless. The gods discovered this original method of getting rid of him."

"And then, too, Mother, the scorpion wife eats the body of her husband, but not his soul, and, according to Pierre de Coulevain, the soul will continue progressing," said the young man, with gentle irony.

"No, not according to Pierre de Coulevain, but according to the laws of the Universe. Are you not beginning to believe in our past and in our future?"

"I am."

"Well then, you are on the right path. Do not leave it."

"There is no danger of that."

All through the Autumn, I wended my way to "The Firs" when the weather was fine. Each time I went, my affectionate interest increased, and I always returned from my visit with keener sorrow. I felt a kind of selfish joy in the idea that this poor doomed creature was not my son, that he had not been for nine months next my heart and for twenty-six years within my heart. He would not read anything now but Natural History. I found him always soaring, as it were, above this earth, thanks to his investigations into the depths of vegetable and animal life. We talked about plants, bees and ants, and he said over and over again: "If I had not been ill, I should never have known about all this!" Gradually weaned away from all organised activity, he no longer saw Death confronting him.

Madame X—— did not know how to thank me enough. She sent me flowers and fruit, Roumanian preserves and preserved citron which she made herself. When I left Switzerland in January, the invalid was in one of those extraordinary stages of his illness when recovery seems possible. Two months later, he died suddenly, when drinking a glass of champagne. His young cousin, who had been his first love, was with him. Divine mercy was shown to him in this ending. His poor mother who, as she told me herself, had "carried him off like a cat carries its young between its teeth," took him back to Roumania in a coffin. She only survived him a few months.

And the author who had been the unconscious agent of all this woe is an excellent man, with a brilliant, but vulgar, mind. He had probably written the homicidal sentence with a cigarette between his lips and his shoulders shaking with a little satisfied laugh, thinking the passage very strong. Yes, with just a few words, he had killed two human creatures. It was, in truth, very strong!

CHAPTER VI

THERE is room for everything in the marvellous human motor on which Nature has been at work for millions of centuries and on which it is still at work. There is room for our unconscious dreams when asleep, and for the conscious dreams of our waking hours. There is room for the artistic dream, for the dream of love and for the great metaphysical dream.

If we could, I will not say think, but reflect just a very little, the phenomenon alone which constitutes the romance and the romance-writer would reveal to us the profoundness of our collaboration in the divine work and our true rôle of *predetermined* beings.

It would seem as though reality produced enough love, grief, illusions, evil and good, and certainly enough adultery. It appears that there is not enough though, and that we must have all this artificially, as well. The novelist is employed to collect pictures, gestures, and a thousand different grimaces, impressions and sensations, just as the bee collects honey, and man is not more free than the bee to choose the fertilising matter, for it must produce Life. This increase of psychical substance creates, within the lobes of the novelist's brain, *films*, like those of the cinematographic apparatus and, by means of these films, a whole fictitious world is elaborated, the waves of which mingle with those of the real world and increase their activity to a considerable degree. In the poem or the romance, man

imitates, more or less well, the work of the gods. Like them he multiplies circumstances, incidents, coincidences, he makes *knots* in the chain of Life, which he draws up tightly in an artistic way and loosens again in just as artistic a manner. This *copy* is part of Nature and is submitted, like Nature itself, to laws of harmony. The writer cannot put down on paper *pêle-mêle*, the words, sentences, and even the inspirations, that crowd together at the back of his forehead. In order to obey the instinct of perfection which he has within him, he is compelled to give a beautiful form to all these. Victor Hugo was once asked whether it was easy to write beautiful verse. He replied: "It is either very easy or impossible." Dante found it easy, probably, to write the *Divine Comedy* in stanzas of three lines, because that rhythm had been assigned to him. The hundred songs in triplets, the technique of which is admirable, seem to come out of some marvellous phonographic cylinder. The cylinder certainly was marvellous, but I expect that he, too, did not write without erasures. What a miracle those erasures represent! They mean that the cellules of our brains correct themselves. If they were not *living* and *thinking* cellules, could they possibly do this? Those of poor Guy de Maupassant, when he himself was dying and out of his mind, continued to seek for perfection, striking out a word here and there and putting another one in its place. I do not know anything more touching than the corrections in those last lines that he wrote. They made my warm tears flow. I do not think any writer could look at them with dry eyes.

The romances of the real world are always stronger than those of the ideal world, but they make less impression on us. They seem farther away from us, lost, as it were, in the universal movement. Poets and novelists, with their *films*, circumscribe action and give an immediate *dénouement*, which more or less satisfies our sense of justice. They place a drop of life, a picture of love, for instance, under a magnifying glass and bring it so near to us that we can follow the play of it and feel all its various emotions. More or less endowed with that power of suggestion of which we know so little, they succeed in making us live for ourselves their dreams. I have often wished that it could be given to me to see, grouped together and made flesh, all the personages of fables, legends, novels and of the metaphysical dream, of all the dreams which have sprung from the human brain. Most of them are, undoubtedly, mere puppets, out of proportion and ill-balanced, but there are also figures which the art of our great masters has made living and even immortal. Humanity has adopted these, and one generation has transmitted them to the next one. Cinderella and Prince Charming, dreamed of by some Egyptian nurse, are as old as the Pyramids.

In order to accomplish this miracle, to develop their *plans*, poets and novelists have nothing but words. Hamlet said disdainfully: "Words, words!" and they are, nevertheless, most formidable. When I realise their power, I feel a veritable awe, and the more I write, the more cautiously do I handle them. *Words are a loaded weapon; each one contains a fragment of the soul of*

the world. Science will not contradict me there. With words, one can penetrate minds, affect the senses, enter into communion with one's fellow-creatures, with the Beyond even. With words, one can make love, cause hatred, do good or evil, move masses of individuals, lead them on to death, to victory or to defeat and increase or lessen the strength of arms and hearts. There are words which are immortal, words which are endearing, which are delightful to write, as a sort of subtle voluptuousness seems to emanate from them. Then there are words which bite like acid and which burn and gnaw like radium. Words to the *fabulator* are what the chisel is to the sculptor, the brush to the painter. It was with words that Homer preserved the pagan dream for us and with words that he immortalised Troy. It was with words that Dante caught the soul of the Middle Ages and that he transmitted to us his most poetical figures, such as that of the Pia Tolomei. In a few lines, he succeeded in giving us the impression of a faithless wife, relegated by her husband to the Castle of Maremmes and killed slowly by the deadly air of the surrounding plain. When one passes, in the train, through the low-lying district which skirts the Tyrrhenian Sea, the gentle phantom draws us to the window and we gaze and gaze and feel its presence subjectively, thanks to having read the words:

"Remember me, I am la Pia
Sienne gave me birth, Maremme killed me.
Does he know it, he who, in wedding me, put on my finger
his gemmed ring."

With words, Shakespeare created, by means of his *Romeo and Juliet*, an atmosphere of love to which multitudes of beings have vibrated and do still vibrate. With words, by his Lady Macbeth, he created an atmosphere of terror, the suggestion of which acts on us always, and this seems to me miraculous.

From my earliest childhood, the dictionary interested me. Did I know then, that in a far, far distant future, I should need so many of its nouns, its adjectives and its verbs? It is quite possible that I did know it, for all is possible in the great mystery which we ourselves are.

Up to the present, the dreams of novelists have only been stories of love and war, stories that have lulled humanity in its childhood and given it hours of rest and forgetfulness. A blessing then on the story-tellers! Now that humanity has reached the adult age, nurses' stories no longer suffice. Humanity is *blasé* and sick to death of the various emotions provoked by the conjugation of the verb *to love*. Formerly, it asked for love and always for love; at present, it asks for ideas and always for ideas, as aliments for its thought. It has become aware of the mystery in the midst of which it lives, and it is disturbed by this, anxious and curious about it. It wants to be charmed and interested by truth now, and no longer by fables. If it be true that the demand creates the function, then story-tellers will become novelists. The novelist will have to acquire an infinite amount of knowledge. He will walk hand in hand with science and will enter into the struggle for

progress and right. This evolution of the story into the novel commenced farther back than we imagine. Zola was one of its precursors and it would seem as though he stopped it again. Nature frequently has these instances of falling back. Zola was not understood, or rather he was wrongly understood, which is worse. He had neither the genius which purifies, the spirituality which elevates, nor the intuition of the sovereign end and object. His novels are painful, intense with reality. Some of them are nauseating. *Pot-Bouille* affected my sense of smell to such a degree that I was obliged to throw it away. Its pictures of low life caused people with the slightest refinement absolute disgust; but among the majority of readers, and particularly among younger ones, they roused the animality in their nature. The rousing of this animality has the instantaneous effect of disarming the individual, and of making the reaction of good difficult or impossible. In this alone, Zola's books were immoral. If humanity held its head up higher than its lower parts, the sight of all ugliness would make it love beauty still more. Humanity has not yet reached that stage. The last page of *Nana*, for instance, is a warning of the highest importance. Nana, that product of alcoholism, poisoned by her own vice and the vice of others, Nana is dying in a modern *caravansary*, whilst the young generation she has corrupted and prepared for defeat, files by, under her windows shouting: "To Berlin! To Berlin!" and it marches to Sedan! In my opinion, that is the strongest and most tragic lesson that any moralist has ever conceived. I should like that

page to be pinned up in the bedroom of every student. The hour of Justice will strike some day for Zola.

After the novel of the deep abysses, we have had the novel of the high summits. We owe this to Camille Flammarion. Camille Flammarion! Novelists do not recognise him as one of them and astronomers still less than the novelists. What is he then? He is just himself — a poet who has science, and a savant who has poetry, at his command.

At present, great doctors diagnose and prescribe without sounding their patients, without feeling their pulses and without knowing the colour of their tongues. In the same way, certain astronomers, in order to study the stars, turn their backs on them. By means of lines, figures and numbers, written on paper, they can tell their positions, their dimensions and follow their course through the infinite. We have telegraphy without wires, speech without the man, we shall soon have the science of medicine without doctors, and astronomy without astronomers. As for Camille Flammarion, he has been contemplating the celestial field, in which we are evolving, for a long time, and he has the boldness to imagine that, since our little planet is inhabited, all habitable worlds are inhabited also, and that these luminous spheres, like our own, are merely the *houses* of the Eternal God, the different homes of the beings who mount the symbolic ladder, our future homes no doubt. This was not science, but intuition, that kind of intuition which made the sacred poet say in one of his psalms: "He made of the winds his messengers and of the fiery flames his servants." And to these living

notes of the concert of the Universe, Flammarion listened with his imagination, as a Terrestrian, alert, but his imagination played him false. His dreams are like those of mediums. They are a disconcerting medley of scientific truth, of elevated idealism and of coarse sensuality. He took liberties with *Urania*, the memory of which amused me when I found myself in the presence of that Muse at Rome, for her statue has an expression of serenity which is truly celestial. The astronomer-poet attempted a flight which is impossible at present, and he fell to earth somewhat disastrously, but his effort has not been in vain. He drew some very noble minds away from materialism. Men are the only creatures on our earth which can look at the sky, and for the great majority of them the sky is only a barometer and a thermometer at present.

A barometer and a thermometer, this plan of the Universe all strewn with living stars! One feels a certain shame in having to own this. Flammarion, by popularising astronomy, has put us in touch with the visible Beyond. He has taught us to look there, not only for forecasts of good and bad weather, but for consolation and hope. He has done more for us, perhaps, than the savants have, with their parallels, their angles and their figures. The hour of Justice will strike for him too.

The evolution of romantic literature is going on, in the same way, in England. Great novelists are courageously facing philosophical questions. One of them, Wells, is the most colossal and fantastical genius of our epoch; an apocalyptical genius, such as only the

Anglo-Saxon race and the country of the Bible could produce. His novels give a terrifying impression of chaos, of a chaos over which the Spirit of God has not yet moved. From his ark, beaten by the waves, he sends out the dove, but it comes back always, as it discovers no summit on which to rest. This does not matter, as, by showing us the play of the forces of Life, he gives us an idea of its value, and that is a great deal. In my opinion, Zola, Flammarion and Wells have had the conception of what the modern novel should be and I only hope that their example may be followed.

Poets and novelists excite less enthusiasm than musicians, but more admiration and curiosity, as they create more emotions. Women are given to imagining that they must feel more intensely and do things in a more remarkable way than ordinary mortals. That may be, but there is always something artificial about their feelings and doings — they are rarely unpublished, they either have served or will serve for *copy*. As for the *fabulators*, everything is a subject for copy for them, their own love affairs and their own sorrows included. Thanks to the duality which takes place in their mind, they can watch themselves living, loving and suffering, and they feel a special kind of voluptuousness in relating all this. In saying this, I am betraying the secret of the brotherhood, but truth seems to me more wonderful than illusion. Poets and novelists are rarely the men of their books; their books are merely their dreams. When they come out of their dreams, they are quite astonished to find on paper a whole crowd of beautiful things, and sometimes of very

ugly things, which seem to them quite foreign to their own nature. The "Self," that poor little embryo of individuality which we all possess, experiences the reactions of a scholar set free. The author, who has made his personages keep up a brilliant dialogue, becomes so taciturn that he appears stupid; the one who has been very serious and given to moralising enjoys being frivolous; the one who has spoken with warmth of humanitarianism, of fraternity, acts like a regular egoist. All this is always a disillusion for the admirers of the writer, and frequently for the writer himself. It sometimes happens that, by auto-suggestion, the dream acts on the dreamer and makes him better or worse than he was. The two that I call "the Other One" and "Self" act upon each other mutually. When there is complete harmony between them, their work gets the full and right note of perfect harmony and that is very fine.

Last year I read a novel by a foreign author, in which there were some wonderful pages of great depth and intuition. There were also some pages that were filthy, worthy of a gutter-cat in the spring time; homicidal pages like those which killed Andros X——, and I was astonished at this lack of harmony. A few days later, an English lady told me triumphantly that this author was to dine that evening, with her and her daughter, at our hotel. I chose my seat at table, so that I might observe this man. His personal appearance gave me a shock. He was small and puny, with very little hair on his head, his face was narrow and pallid, his eyes shone and he had a suspicion of moustache. His

general appearance, set off by a large forehead, gave me the impression of a something *cloven*, and viciously refined. When he talked with his hostess, his expression was not in the least animated, but when he spoke to the daughter, who was young and pretty, his face lighted up. For a few moments, I turned him over and over again in my mind. He was disconcerting, as all hybrid beings are, and then, all at once, I said to myself: "Why, he is a faun, a literary faun!" And then, recalling the magnificent waves of his poetry, I added: "A faun of genius." I understood then the strangeness of his work and of his character. The women on whom his magnetism acts must be neurasthenic she-fauns.

I ought to be able to pierce the mystery of which my own brain is the theatre. I cannot do this though. In order to keep certain secrets, Nature imitates the cuttle-fish. She flings around these secrets a dense cloud, and, just when we think we have seized them, they escape. Life is an eternal game of hide and seek.

Are poets and novelists the favourites of the gods, as the Ancients used to maintain? I should say, rather, that they are their martyrs. Usually, if they are richly gifted, they are poorly enough endowed with this world's goods. They have to dream in order to live, and to live in order to dream. They have to be spurred on by the need of daily bread, or by ambition for glory, as there is an innate laziness within them, a sort of hypnotic laziness, which prevents them from taking up the pen. These dreamers are worked upon, until they are almost torn to pieces, by the forces of reality and

the forces of the ideal to which they belong. It is quite in vain that they isolate themselves and that they close their door to every one, the realities of life always reach them. It may be in the form of anxiety about money matters, or the remembrance of unjust criticism; it may be that the calls of love, friendship or amusements, like so many invisible arrows, cross their dream and very frequently break its charm, or its thread. Nothing is more painful than this. When the realities have won them over, the ideal claims them again. Their heroes and their heroines pursue them as far as the very privacy of their life and, promising them glory and wealth, bring them back, whether they will or not, to the unreal world. All this creates constant struggle which is infinitely painful. Only those who wear the medals know what is on the other side of them. This is fortunate, as the other side of these medals would cause the envious too much pleasure. The other side of success is more often than not hard for poets and novelists. When they are once free of material anxiety, there is the anxiety about their renown and renown is a young person whose maintenance costs a great deal. If she is not well fed, instead of putting the trumpet in her mouth and playing a sublime air, she turns it upside down. The writer who has become famous has to give himself away in a thousand different manners. He must give autographs, effigies, pleasant little speeches, and he has the sensation, all the time, of being cut up into slices and into pieces. He belongs to the chroniclers, to the journalists, to the biographers, like any ordinary criminal. Because he has committed

a few volumes, the public considers that it has the right to know all about his past, his character and his tastes. When he no longer has life for defending himself against this childish curiosity, his secret drawers are broken open and his private correspondence is found. His weaknesses and his failings are published pitilessly. His friends, and even his family, are sometimes the accomplices of this profanation. Respect for the dead is not yet known in our civilised society. Men take off their hats before the body which has become inert, and the gesture is beautiful, but the soul, which is still living, is offended unscrupulously. Lecturers, for instance, instead of directing the attention of their listeners to the work of the author who is no longer there, to the effort it represents and to the mystery that it contains, dwell chiefly on the psychology of love and he who makes the dead talk has it all his own way. I heard one of these men examine for more than an hour, trying all kinds of effects himself with his eyes, moustache and hands, the question as to whether a certain author had loved a woman platonically or otherwise. The idea of this living man, young and very much in the flesh, seated there before a table with his glass of water in front of him, calling up to judgment a great man who was dead, not to thank him for what he had done for humanity, but to drag out of him the poor little secret which he had so gallantly kept to himself! It was grotesque enough to make one laugh and cry. I regretted that there was no law to punish the violation of a man's life, as there is to punish the violation of his tomb.

And these celebrities, like millionaires, are very rarely loved for themselves. They are sought out, not on account of their genius, or their personal qualities, but on account of the prestige they have won, because intimacy with them gives a sort of *reflected light* — that light which snobs of all kinds seek. And the day when they have let some weakness be seen in the arena, their prestige will diminish and very soon they will only see the shoulders of their admirers.

Poets and novelists are, nevertheless, said to be the favourites of the gods! It is not so, though, for the higher gifts they have received create in them hopeless weaknesses. They have nerves, but no muscles, nerves which are always kept at high tension by thought, thus making them ridiculously sensitive to physical and moral suffering. A pin-prick is to them what a dagger-thrust would be to ordinary creatures. Like all subjectives, and they are subjective in the highest degree, they have great vanity. They always require homage and they must feed, with their own substance, the fire on which the public will throw grains of incense. Many of them lose their heads with success. They are not content with praise, but must have adulation and flattery. This adulterated wine intoxicates them, so that their dreams become incoherent and very often their genius is killed. Generally speaking, poets and novelists know nothing either of life or of men, and still less of women, who, in hope of becoming the heroines of books, frequently pose to them. They commenced writing very young, before they could read, that is, before they were able to observe, and they continue study-

ing psychology shut up in their own room, by the light of any intuitions which may come to them. When they rouse up from their dreams, they are more or less dazzled, they cannot see things as they are and they are deceived and taken in like children. Providence, who knows how defenceless her authors are, frequently places near them some devoted woman to encourage and protect them. There is less of this solicitude shown towards women novelists though. Providence leaves them to get through their difficulties alone. This is very flattering, but rather hard. When they are young and pretty, they can easily find masculine hands to push the brambles back along their path. They have to pay for such services — in kind — and this costs them a great deal.

To sum up briefly, the makers of the *knots*, the makers of the ideal world, are very ordinary beings who do extraordinary work; and this means considerable effort. The only ones to be pitied, though, are those who cannot make this effort, those who are born with the ambition for taking long flights and have only received pinions. They start — oh, they always start — but they cannot mount. After hovering round a little, they are obliged to touch earth again, and it sometimes happens that they are killed in touching earth. Their dreams are not understood and are so imperfect that they cannot get into the current of literature, consequently they never come to anything. The dreams cause these dreamers to be disgusted with the realities of life and unfit them for material struggle, so that they are the vanquished ones. The conquerors of to-day

were, perhaps, the vanquished ones of yore, and in the vanquished ones of to-day, we must salute the conquerors of the future. In the meantime, though, they suffer cruelly. I can quite imagine this, for I once experienced the sensation of being blackballed. The Editor of a review, who, it appears, was rather short-sighted that day, refused one of my novels. On seeing the manuscript come back to the table on which it had been written, I felt a special kind of suffering which I had not hitherto experienced, a suffering which did not weigh on my *heart*, but only on my brain and which seemed, figuratively speaking, to paralyse my arms and legs. It was atrocious! In spite of the very evident revenge I have had, the thought of it still annoys me and I fancy that I am giving way to paltry spite in telling about it.

Some of my unknown correspondents, I have *felt* to be poets or novelists. They were not the happy ones, but poor, anxious, tortured souls. More than a year ago, I received a letter from a woman in one of the English colonies. The impression which it gave me will never be obliterated. After apologising for her indiscretion and saying all kinds of pleasant things in French, which she did not write easily, she continued in her own language: "I am writing to you from a far-off, blazingly hot station of the United Provinces of India. My husband and I often drive to a little charred station, simply to watch the trains pass by. Last week, we went there to see a friend who was passing through. He had grown thin, and his face was bronzed and tired looking. He got out of his compart-

ment and we clasped hands in silence. 'I have brought you some joy,' he said, giving me a yellow-covered book. It was your book," my letter went on. "A few short minutes and then he got into his compartment again. The train, which was to carry him away, glided along the rails, slowly at first, then faster and still more fast, until it finally disappeared. The meeting had taken place. When will it take place again? These meetings of friends are events in our lives, they are the pools of water in the desert!"

How much there was in these few lines! They communicated to me the homesickness of this exiled couple, transplanted from a land of verdure to the confines of an Indian desert. I saw them driving along against a background of burnt-up desolation, and returning to their bungalow in gloomy silence. I felt that their thirst had not been quenched by the drop of water they had drunk, and every time that their picture came on to my screen, I felt a pang of sympathy at my heart. My correspondent must possess the magnetism of the writer to have produced so durable an effect. I was tempted to tell her this, but, out of prudence, I refrained. It often happens that Nature puts certain germs of art into a human brain quite intentionally. When the sap mounts, thanks either to love or grief, these germs may produce a few beautiful pages of poetry or of prose, but these are just will-o'-the-wisps. Authors to whom they write tell them that they are born poets or novelists, thus creating wrong vocations which lead to intellectual disasters.

This same incomprehensible Nature had behaved to

me in a strange way, which I no longer dare call cruel, but which was cruel nevertheless. It had given me a fairly complete set of literary cellules, and I was not allowed to use them. Consequently, during three quarters of my existence, they were sterile. At present, I realise that, although they were sterile, they were not inactive. They were always catching impressions and pictures, amassing an enormous amount of material and, at the appointed time, they produced — what they were intended to produce. They made my childhood strange and odd, my growing up difficult and my girlhood painful. They inspired me with unlimited ambition, and with a need of beauty, luxury and comfort which I could not satisfy. They affected my character and my destiny. They might have played some bad tricks on me if other forces, perfect physical balance, a gaiety that was always triumphant and a sense of humour, had not held them in check. They made things uncomfortable, but amusing; thanks to them I never knew what it was to be bored and they always kept me company. They were able to make me cerebrally romantic, but not sentimentally romantic, and it is to this that I owe my salvation. They were responsible, I fancy, for something very foolish, of which I was ashamed for a long time and which I can explain to myself now.

In the first half of last century, a pleiad of poets, the neurasthenic poets of those days, had introduced a sort of morbid melancholy into literature. Our mothers had drunk of this literature to their soul's content, and they transmitted it to us. Millevoye's *Feuilles Mortes* had brought consumption into vogue as

an illness. We were ashamed of our fresh complexions and of our robust health; we drank vinegar in order to be pale and we were in love with death, instead of being in love with life. Towards my fifteenth year (at that critical age girls are capable of anything), I began to cough, with the hope of dying of consumption. The idea of dying of consumption seemed interesting and beautiful to me. I am quite sure I should not have been fascinated by the idea of dying of tuberculosis. What a power there is in words! Without troubling about the anxiety I was causing my mother, I continued this cruel game for some time. One day when I was kneeling at the confessional, and about to ask for absolution, I coughed as I was in the habit of doing, but a sudden fit of laughter interrupted my cough. The absurdity of the comedy I was playing had just struck me. I laughed and blushed for myself, with one of those deep blushes, the sensation of which one does not forget easily. While I was about it, I ought to have confessed my long lie, but I had not the courage to do this, and I regret it to this day. However that may be, I was thoroughly cured of the folly which had been engendered by the Shelleyism and the Byronism I had absorbed.

I still have a psychological document of my early girlhood. It reflects the mentality of the epoch and it shows, too, that, from our earliest days, we have within us the germ of our respective vocations. This document is an exercise book containing my compositions at the age of fifteen. It seems to me miraculous that I should still have it. It has escaped several disasters

and my mania for throwing away all that is in my way. It has been taken from the bottom of one trunk and put into another one times without number, without getting lost. It was, no doubt, intended to serve in some way. Things, like men, are indestructible until they have given to Life what they were intended to give, even if this be only an impression. This little schoolgirl's exercise-book, the ancestor of the little exercise books I have always used, as a writer, is quite yellow with age, just as I am myself. We have turned yellow together. The golden sand which dried the ink is still adhering to it. The characters are microscopic, but very firmly written. They look so ancient and comic with their curly letters. At first sight, they seem to have no relation at all to my big, modern hand-writing. On examining them carefully, though, one recognises that they are produced by the same hand. In this little book there are the following sketches: *The Story of a Cat told by Itself*, *A Story* (I had probably not been able to find a title for this one), *A Schoolgirl's Day*, and *The Story of a Violet*. The construction of these inventions is very good, the characters are not badly drawn, the dialogue is lively and natural, so that dialogue is evidently my strong point. My sentences are short, although there are too many adjectives in them. In those days, adjectives reigned supreme. Some of these are no longer in favour today, but they are used frequently in my stories. "Indescribable" is one of these and the word "suave," which we used to think delightful to write. Nowadays we are apt to put "exquisite" and "adorable" for

everything. I am studying, with the greatest curiosity, the figures and scenes which must have been formed behind my childish forehead. They belong essentially to their epoch. I come across the most astonishing phrases, such, for instance, as: "Obedience is only sweet when the heart commands it." "Happy is he who has his tomb in the same place as his cradle." Where could I have found all that I wonder? Then, too, I marry one of my heroines and I say of her: "She has the radiant brightness of love on her face." Where can I have come across love? She marries a naval officer. In our dreams, naval officers occupied a large place in those days. At present they are out of date, but they can be quite easy in their minds, as they will come into favour again. This officer, M. d'Elbène, goes back to sea after being married two months. He remains absent five years and, on returning home, he finds there the three little children God has sent him, by way of making up to him for his exile. I am only surprised that I did not put half a dozen while I was about it. This is how I wrote history at the age of fifteen. On reading this epilogue of mine again, I laughed, but my eyes were full of tears. I saw, with a certain pleasure, that, through all this heap of rubbish and commonplace, the modern spirit made its way here and there. I found, too, a surprising knowledge of the human heart. I might have been an old inhabitant of this world. Here and there, these imaginative writings disgust me. They reveal a good, loving, pious soul, which had nothing in common with the undisciplined, critical, brusque little girl that I was. Was I then

deliberately playing the hypocrite? No, I was quite incapable of that at all ages of my life. What does it mean then? It simply means that my individuality was not yet developed and I was affected by the subjective, sentimental soul of the epoch, by its childish and conventional ideal. In *A Schoolgirl's Day*, I recognise my true self. I was quite natural in this, daring and gay, and I exclaim: "Life is so beautiful, I should like to live a long, long time." *The Story of a Cat* stupefied me and I have not yet recovered from my amazement. This story, from one end to the other, was to be my own story. Did the subconscious part of me know this? It is quite possible. After rereading these pages, written in my girlhood, I was both touched and furious and I exclaimed aloud: "Little goose, instead of talking of love and marriage, why did you not watch the insects, the birds and the flowers!" Alas, the little goose had to be forty years older before she learnt to watch and to *see* the insects, the birds and the flowers. Her eye had to be born again.

I had often wondered how it was that I did not begin to write at an earlier age, when everything seemed to point to that for me. This poor little exercise-book, showing me a sample of my early mentality, explained this to me. It was to *serve* for this end. It has served, so that I can now burn it. Before putting the pen between my fingers, Nature was obliged to prepare my brain to receive the ideas it was to transmit. If I had written with my subjective mind of former days, I should have spoken of Life with as much knowledge as I spoke of marriage at the age of fifteen. The children

of my early life would have been born old, and I should be ashamed of them at present. The children of my old age were born young and I am rather proud of them, of the last one more particularly, because it is the youngest and the most modern of all of them, because, with this last one, I plunged into the future, into the future that I shall not see. On leaving Paris, I left the manuscript with my publishers and I corrected my proofs here. When the galley-proofs arrived, I pressed them to me with an emotion that was rather ridiculous. If only the type-setters could have seen me! I felt that I was certainly the mother of this thing. The mother — yes — but who was the father? I should like to know that! Ruminating a book had never caused me as much anguish, nor yet as much pleasure. Every minute, as I saw some fresh aspect of Lake Leman, I would exclaim: "I could not describe all your beauty!" One evening, in the hall of the hotel, whilst a very good orchestra was playing, a certain chapter of my book took shape again in my mind; I noticed that the waves of my phrases mingled with the waves of the music, and that they seemed to carry each other along. It was a fresh sensation and a delightful one. I only hope that I may experience it again with this volume. This volume! I wonder whether I shall be allowed to finish it? At times I doubt and think that it will finish me. With the fine unconsciousness of an ignorant creature, I had undertaken the reading of the *Wonderful Romance*. I little guessed the difficulties with which I should meet. This kind of book requires quite another method of work.

It is no longer the dream which constrains me, but reality, and this is formidable and implacable beyond everything I could have imagined. It obliges me to think over my subjects a long time before I touch on them; it will not put up with pretty nothings, untruths that are so easy to write. It plunges me from one mystery to another mystery, and I discover, in the most trivial things, a depth which is alarming for a simple novel writer. I feel tempted over and over again to give up this reading of Life, but I know that it would be impossible for me to return to my stories. Whatever may come of it, the cellules which caused my early life to be sombre are brightening my old age. I tell this, because in this little fact there is hope for every one.

CHAPTER VII

Was the egg created first or the hen? Was it the novel that produced romance or romance which gave birth to the novel? These are two questions quite as important as the "To be or not to be" of Hamlet, and no one has yet been able to answer them in an irrefutable way. I shall not succeed any better than other people, but, as I have just said, I leave one mystery and fall into another one all the time, and it is now this one with which my thoughts are occupied.

It seems to me that it must be the egg which gave birth to the fowl, as Nature is both a layer and a brooder. It hatches germs and is, above all things, a transformer, delighting in making infinitely great things out of infinitely small ones. We ourselves are a living proof of this. In the same way I think it is romance that engendered the novel, because this is the *exaltation of Life*, an exaltation produced by that creative faculty which we call imagination.

Reality never seems strong enough to us and so we add what is fictitious to it, quite unconsciously. It would be interesting to see what a piece of news, told in a little village, would become by the time it had gone the whole round of the village. It would be most interesting to trace what each person had added to it. The narration of a crime, of a catastrophe, or of a cataclysm causes us, in spite of ourselves, a secret delectation. This is not because we enjoy it, but quite the

contrary, as it excites our horror, or our pity, but it brings the tears to our eyes. When an emotion of any kind accelerates the course of our blood, increases the activity of our cellules, it is then and then only that we feel Life, and we love to feel it, that Divine Force, even if it is to crush us.

The romantic element is in Nature; it is one of the most active agents of good and evil. It takes on not only character, but race. Oriental romance does not resemble Western romance nor Anglo-Saxon romance that of the Latin race. Only twenty years back romanticism was very feeble in America, but at present it has made its way there. Sensational abductions, misalliances, divorces and dramas of all kinds are on the increase there, to such a degree that our Old World seems quite virtuous in comparison.

Like poets, romantic people have their waking dreams and, instead of writing them down, they endeavour to live them. It is more agreeable for them, but infinitely more dangerous — and more particularly for others. There are intellectually romantic individuals, sentimentally romantic and mystically romantic. The intellectually romantic ones have dreams of social or artistic grandeur. Such dreams make conquerors, ambitious men or women, artists and criminals of them. Such dreams made Cæsar, Nero, Napoleon, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare. The sentimentally romantic individuals have dreams of affection, of noble devotion, of faithful friendship, of transcendental love and of humanitarianism. These dreams make passionate lovers, philanthropists and an infinite number of sacrificed and crucified

men and women. The romantic mystics have dreams of the Beyond, of heavenly blessedness. Such dreams have made martyrs, men and women like St. Francis, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Theresa.

In private life, there are more romantic individuals among men than among women. That is easily explained. Man has more imagination than woman, his imagination is active, a *creator* of pictures, whilst that of the woman is passive and only a reflector. Both physiologically and psychologically, man needs illusions. It is this which makes faithfulness difficult to him and, in many cases, impossible. Within the sentimentally romantic individual there is a depth of delicacy and of modesty which he conceals with care, but which, constantly hurt, causes him much suffering. Any lack of harmony irritates him, he is enchanted by a mere nothing, and just as easily disenchanted. A man of this kind confessed to me that the admiration he had felt for a certain pretty woman vanished when he discovered her taste for high game. A young friend of mine told me that, during the first months of her married life, she used to go backwards and forwards from her husband's room to her own with bare shoulders. One day, tapping them affectionately, her husband said to her: "If you want me to like seeing those pretty shoulders always, do not show me them too much." The young wife was intelligent and I have reason to believe that she profited by the lesson.

Sentimental, romantic people are *subjective* creatures, and they rarely see things as they are. Blinded by the ideal that they have unconsciously elaborated, they dis-

dain reality, which avenges itself cruelly sometimes. They are the worst statesmen possible. They bring their literature, unconsciously, into their politics, and this is more dangerous than to bring it into their love affairs. Into parliamentary debates, they bring a sort of nervous unevenness, a ridiculous sentimentality, a persistent illogicalness which produces nothing but incoherence. In France, we have too many such romantic individuals in power.

Romantic wives are not precisely the joy and tranquillity of their husbands. They are the women of eternal desire. They always want from love and friendship more than these can give, and they give to love and friendship more than these want. This makes them irritating and uncomfortable. Duality is, with them, quite distinct, just as it is with poets and novelists. This duality allows them to watch themselves live. They see themselves walking, doing things, they hear themselves talking, they endeavour to be poetical, they pose, not only for others, but for themselves too. They keep feeding their own sorrows with a kind of voluptuousness and, when Time has carried these away, they do their utmost to make people think that they still exist. There is never crape enough for their mourning! Those who have only imagination love with open eyes: they have wine, but they never experience the intoxication of wine, they are great *illusionists*. They judge their husbands or their lovers calmly and they usually think them faulty. Such women are dangerous. Still more dangerous is the romantic woman who has a great deal of temperament and plenty of nerves, but who is

not balanced by some great moral force, such as the sentiment of honour or of religion. Her brain, like that of the novelist, is the theatre of a strange phantasmagoria. It manufactures, not films of art, but films of love. Figures appear and disappear upon its screen. It frequently happens that, under the conscious or unconscious action of her thought, one of these figures becomes very clearly defined, takes form literally and, from that moment, her husband has a rival. The rival is sure to be fair if the husband be dark; gentle if the husband be rough, bold and refined if the other be timid and vulgar. The rival has none of the ridiculous attitudes of the human being, he walks, as it were, on the clouds. This figure, which she unconsciously creates and completes herself, becomes her ideal. She has no longer a soul except for this puppet, and her eyes are seeking for it everywhere. She establishes this figure in some mysterious abode which she furnishes, decorates and perfumes in a more or less æsthetic way. And she always sees him there, holding out his arms to her in desperation, always in wild desperation. She sees herself going to him in spite of all obstacles; she sees herself getting out of a carriage at the corner of some street, putting on an indifferent air and then, half suffocated by the beating of her heart, passing through the big gateway of the house and arriving at the threshold of the Paradise, the keys of which are kept by Love and not by St. Peter. She seems like a heroine of romance to herself. Thanks to her imagination, she manages to feel all these emotions. She feasts on them and, if she

should, some day, meet with a being who bears the slightest resemblance, if only thanks to the nose or moustache, to the ideal she has imagined, she will respond to his call and will live out her dream — or will perhaps die of it. If I am not mistaken, this is how Nature makes faithless creatures.

A few weeks ago, probably for the chapter that I was about to write, a young woman was sent to me. She came to see me under the pretext of thanking me for the good that certain of my books had done her, but, in reality, for the simple pleasure of telling me the adventure of which she was the heroine, and also from a wish to appear interesting to a novelist. She is a Parisian society woman, as thin and elegant as a greyhound. Her features were drawn, her fair hair was of a warm shade and her blue eyes shone with feverishness. Her story was somewhat commonplace. At Salso Maggiore, an Italian watering-place that has come into favour quite recently, she had met a certain Austrian baron. She had been madly fascinated by his grand manners and by his fine, romantic sentiments. For the sake of this stranger, she had left her home and her family, and had entirely broken with her past. The romance had lasted three years. By way of epilogue, there had been the rupture and desertion, the inevitable desertion. For the baron, it all meant a pleasant remembrance of a love adventure with a pretty Parisian woman; for the pretty Parisian woman, it had meant divorce, dishonour, uprooting and, finally, being stranded in a hotel; it had meant two deep, ineffaceable wrinkles around a mouth that was still young.

While the poor woman was telling me all this, I studied her closely. I quickly recognised the romantic element in her, and my curiosity made me want to know in what way it had worked on her.

"Were you not happy with your husband?" I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes, and no. He was a good sort, but one of those men who say to you: 'I love you, I am faithful to you, what more can you want?' You can imagine how impossible it would be to make him understand 'the more' that I needed."

"You never had any children, I suppose?"

"No — fortunately. I like to persuade myself that if I had had any, I should have been stronger against temptation. But I am flattering myself, perhaps. Everything was so oppressive: my husband, my mother-in-law, our house. As to the house, I had altered the looks of it entirely."

Those words were a revelation to me.

"I suppose you used to frequent the antiquarians?"

"Yes, I went curiosity hunting, simply because it was the thing to do, at first, but very soon my taste was formed and it began to develop. I became passionately fond of Italian furniture."

"Ah, I see," I exclaimed, delighted with my own intuition. "You handled old stuffs and beautiful embroideries, stroked exquisitely carved wood, admired gilded side-tables with graceful lines and hunted up old portraits, and all these things acted on you in an occult way; you were hypnotised and fascinated by them. They made you feel disgusted with your mod-

ern and, perhaps, *bourgeois* home, and I feel sure that they made you dream some extravagant dream."

My visitor gazed at me, her eyes dilated with surprise.

"Yes, that is quite possible," she said at last slowly. "I did dream of living in some old Italian palace. And after all, I have lived my dream, for I spent my love moon in Venice, in an ideal setting. The ceiling of my bedroom was painted by Tiepolo and it was so beautiful that I feasted on it with my eyes."

"Well, you see where your old curiosities took you; they led you straight along by the hand."

My visitor gave a little discordant laugh.

"I did not know they could be so dangerous," she said. "I shall like them better than ever now," she added, in pure bravado.

It is not enough to recognise that "everything concurs." We must try to find out how, and that is always wonderful. I once happened to ask a delightful young man, of about thirty years of age, why he had not married.

"Because I am afraid," he replied. "You see, I should be honest enough to put all my hopes of happiness into my marriage and I dare not draw, lest a bad card should fall to my lot. I had a very narrow escape once. Some friends, with whom I was staying in the country, introduced me to a family in their neighbourhood. There was the most absolutely charming daughter of about eighteen. After riding together and playing tennis, I was soon in love with her. I felt sure that I should be accepted and I began, in a

very discreet way, to let her see how matters were. One Sunday as we were walking back to the house together, from the park, I ventured, not without great emotion, to tell her something of the feeling I had for her. I can see her now. She was wearing a skirt of white woollen material and a white transparent blouse, through which I could see pretty little ribbons. Her hair was tied low in her neck with a large bow, making her look rather like a school-girl. She seemed to like listening to me and I noticed that her little ear and her cheek turned pink. Just when I thought I had touched her, she stopped short and, looking at me with astonishment on her face, she remarked: 'Is that a declaration?'"

"No," I exclaimed, "not really!" laughing, in spite of myself, as I thought of the effect the girl's words must have produced on the young man.

"Yes, really!"

"And what did you answer?"

"That that was all a gentleman had the right to say to a young girl. She just replied 'Oh!' in a strained tone, and we continued our walk. I was too completely taken aback to say any more on the subject. I understood that she was a romantic girl and, as I do not feel that I am of the stuff of which heroes are made, I gradually drew back. Do you not think I acted wisely?"

I looked at him. He was handsome, but built for an active, prosaic life and with him the young wife would probably have kept saying, all the time: "Is that all!"

"Yes, you acted wisely," I answered with conviction.

"And you can understand that after a wet blanket like that, reaction is not an easy thing and marriage alarms me."

"Yes, I understand perfectly well."

It is quite certain that, among romantic women, there are a great many Emma Bovarys. If imaginative young *bourgeois* women could write and so get rid of the steam they get up, we should have a few more novels and a few less faithless wives. Art would lose by this, but morals would surely gain by it.

The nervous romantic woman is usually a loving wife, a passionately fond mother, or rather a brooder. She would give her life for her family and yet she makes her family thoroughly unhappy. She has a bad way of loving. If her husband does not always answer her as the shepherd did the shepherdess, she thinks that she is neglected and betrayed. If he is kept out late, she gets anxious in the most ridiculous way. For her children, she does not accept the struggle of life, because they are her children. She suffers more than they do and she will not face the eventuality of long separations. She cuts her little ones' wings in the most stupid way, in order to keep them a longer time with her. A character of this kind creates a disturbed atmosphere in which no one could be happy. I used to attribute all this to an excess of feeling, but I now see that women of this kind are simply agitated creatures, all out of tune, who do not love with their intelligence and their heart, but with their nerves, nerves over which they

have no control. They are very much to be pitied and those who live with them are still more to be pitied. Only a doctor, who is a real neuro-physiologist, could put them in tune again.

The romantic element in a superior, well-balanced woman is a force. She makes use of it in order to extract from reality, no matter how poor that may be, all the beauty and poetry that it contains. She can create the most harmonious setting for herself out of nothing. She is charming in love, in friendship and in social intercourse. When she loves her husband, she will frequently attribute to him gifts that he does not possess; she makes a pedestal for him and, if repeated shocks should crack it, she will cement it heroically, so that it lasts as long as she does herself. I have known women who, thanks to their faith and their constant suggestion, have made of their husbands men of worth, if they could not make men of genius of them.

Within the last twenty years, the gods have been creating, in America, a curious variation of the romantic woman, the intellectually romantic woman. She has been admirably studied and photographed in a novel entitled *Together*, by Herrick. She is the woman who sins, not like Mary Magdalene, and not like the Frenchwoman, the Italian woman or even the Englishwoman, from a need of the poetry of love, but in order to satisfy the aspirations of the superior soul she has discovered within herself which guides her towards another soul equally superior. I am quite sure that what we read in this book was lived in this spirit. All this is the result of the higher studies to which feminine

brains, that are insufficiently prepared for such studies, have been submitted. The brains will be prepared for the studies, but, in the meantime, may God preserve every husband from the intellectually romantic wife! It makes me smile to think that if any one but an American had written *Together*, his effigy would have been burnt in America.

The romantic element is very strong in the people themselves of every nation. It is frequently the cause of the most sublime actions and still more frequently of criminal deeds. I had the good fortune to meet with it once in its *natural* state, free from all pose, in a very humble woman, and never has it appeared to me so miraculous.

In the corridor of a hotel, at which I was staying for the first time, I often met one of the persons employed there, the sempstress. She was a woman of about fifty, a typical Frenchwoman of Southern France, holding her head up like a true Arlesian and walking with the light step of a nun. The expression of her very beautiful, dark eyes, which were much younger than her age, aroused my curiosity. I recognise very quickly, now, eyes that have a history, and those certainly had one. The woman had an extremely timid look when her eyes met mine, but a ray [illegible] to come from them and I had the impres[illegible] gave me something, a something which [illegible] was probably on that account that [illegible] However that may be, I asked her [illegible] find me a work-girl who would co[illegible] a week, to put a few necessary

and to keep my wardrobe and drawers tidy. Blushing deeply and in a nervous voice, she told me that she would gladly do all this herself, and the matter was at once settled. From the very first, I recognised in her a refined nature. She came in the evenings, after her day's work, and on Sunday afternoons when the weather was bad. When I happened to be there, she moved about very quietly and I could feel a sort of affectionate respectfulness in her attentions. If I were lying down on my sofa, she would arrange the cushions under my head, pull up the rug when it was slipping off and generally look after my comfort in a way which made me think how pleasant it would be to be always waited on like this. Very often even, she would put flowers on my dressing-table. Urged on by the real interest I felt in her, I tried to find out something about her life. She told me that she was from Provence, that her brother and two sisters were employed in hotels and that, for the last five years, all the linen of this hotel had been in her charge. Her natural reserve, the pride and sensitiveness which I knew she had, held my curiosity in check. I could feel, nevertheless, that she had some confidence or some confession to make to me. I even felt sure that she had only offered her services to me on that account. Several times, I surprised a mute appeal, or a distressed look, in her eyes. I saw her lips move as though she were going to ask a question, and then she was silent. It was very evident that I had not found the right words for unlocking her soul.

One Sunday afternoon, as I was sitting at my writ-

ing-table, looking through some notes, she was diligently arranging one of my blouses. Without being aware of it, she attracted my attention. I could see her three-quarter profile and she made the most harmonious figure in her simplicity. It was a pleasure to look at her. Her dark hair was still thick. She wore it twisted low in her neck and this showed up the oval of her face. She was wearing a well-cut, grey dress of woollen material and her linen collar and cuffs and white apron were perfectly clean. Thanks to her long eyelashes, her eyes, even when she was looking down, were beautiful and warm looking. The years that had passed over her, and the daily struggle, had traced deep lines around her nose and mouth, but, curiously enough, they had respected her forehead. This was as smooth as though she were only twenty years of age. I have noticed this peculiarity among men who are thinkers. And strangely enough, too, she did not look like an old maid, but like a married woman.

"Suzanne, how is it that you are not married?" I suddenly asked, prompted probably by the impression I had just had.

I had thrown my bait, in the hope of obtaining one of those simple stories which are my delight, and I obtained something far, far better. My sudden question stopped the workwoman's needle short.

"I have often been asked that," she answered. "I do not know why."

"Because you must certainly have been very attractive."

"You are very kind to say so. Yes, I could have

married like other girls, but you see, my mother was a widow with four children. I was the eldest and had to help her, for she could never have done everything herself, although she was a hard worker. She went out as charwoman and, every morning at daybreak, winter and summer, she sold hot coffee to working men. She had her little stall in the recess of a big gateway to a house. She had been allowed to install her little stove there. When she was at the oven, I had to mind the mill. I was not even able to serve apprenticeship to a sempstress, as I wanted to."

"You went to school, though, I suppose?"

"No, but I had lessons such as are not given in schools. One of the flats, on the first floor of the house in which we lived, was inhabited by an old lady who lived quite alone. My mother kept her flat in order and I did her errands. Every one called her Madame Louis, but she must have had another name that we never knew. She was a very little woman, and yet, I do not know why, she never looked small. She had very white hair and clearly-cut features and she looked like an old portrait that was alive. Everything was very beautiful in her little flat. I have seen rooms in the houses of rich people, but not one that seemed to me furnished as well as hers. Her furniture was very old, though. She had a great many books, and pictures like those in picture galleries. They represented gentlemen in uniform and ladies in low-necked dresses and she put flowers in front of these portraits. I fancied she had come to our poor district, not only because she had a small income, but because she wanted to do good,

and that she certainly did, to such a degree that people called her 'Our Lady of Help.' It was she who taught me to read, write and reckon and all that I know of geography and history. I studied with her an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. She gave me lessons to learn by heart, and I learnt them whilst working with my fingers. She often used to invite me to take my basket of mending and sit with her in the evenings. Those evenings were fête-days for me. She used to read poetry and fables to me and tell me about the lives of great men. Dear Madame Louis! I owe her as much as I owe to my mother who brought me into the world. She died of pneumonia after three days' illness. I was sixteen years old and I nursed her and closed her eyes. That has always been my consolation. Every one in the neighbourhood went to her funeral. Some gentleman we had never seen came and took away her pretty furniture, which was all as soft to touch as satin. She left me three hundred francs, which she had probably economised out of her income. She left me, too, all of her books that I could understand. For a long time after her death, I had such a pang at my heart every time I passed her door that I had no breath left for climbing up to our fifth floor. My mother used to be quite jealous. 'You could not feel more grief if I had died,' she said, and this was quite true."

"Do you not think that it was the society of Madame Louis that spoilt you and prevented your marrying a man of your own station?" I asked, smiling.

"Perhaps so — and then, too, we are proud in our

family and my mother would never have endured being kept by her son-in-law, so I had to stay with her. No, I could not marry, but I have been very happy, all the same," added the woman, in a voice that suddenly became lower, thanks to her emotion. "I imagined that I was married."

"Really!" I said, with the sensation of the fisherman when he feels the line vibrating in his hand.

Suzanne glanced at my face anxiously.

"You will make fun of me," she said.

"No, indeed," I replied quickly. "I love day-dreams. Tell me about yours, just as though I were your confessor."

This put the poor woman at her ease and, with her beautiful eyes fixed on me and her hands still, she continued, with a faint blush on her face:

"I fancied I was the wife of a fine fellow, tall, strong, with fair hair, blue eyes, a beautiful colour in his cheeks and a drooping moustache. I named him Louis."

"In remembrance of your friend, no doubt?"

Suzanne nodded and continued, in a lower voice:

"I used to picture myself with him in a little home of two very light, airy rooms looking on to an old garden. There were red geraniums in our window and birds singing madly. The furniture, the kitchen things and the floor all shone — oh, how I made them shine! Louis was a mechanician and in the evening, when he came home, he did not bring with him the odour of the public-house, like other men, but the odour of his work-shop, a good odour of iron and of fresh air. After dinner, he would read the newspaper to me while I

was sewing, and he had a voice like music. In the spring, he brought me violets and he said such beautiful things to me. Oh, he was very much in love with me —"

"Did you never see any other faces than that of Louis?" I asked, prompted by my pitiless curiosity.

"Oh, never; that would have been impossible," answered my penitent, with an accent that made me ashamed of my question. I was careful not to tell her that there are people who are faithless even in their dreams.

"And did you not imagine, too, that you had children?"

The emotion and the blush caused by my question revealed to me how profound the dream had been.

"Yes — a little girl, fair like her father and with his blue eyes. We used to take her out on Sundays, and in summer we filled her carriage with flowers, so that even her head could not be seen. It was so pretty, all that."

"Suzanne, you are a poet," I exclaimed, charmed with this little picture.

"You are laughing at me —"

"Not at all."

"My life would have been very dull, if it had not been for these fancies."

"And when did they come to you?"

"As soon as I was alone, but particularly in church."

"In church!" I repeated, struck by this revelation.

"Yes, I used to go in often on that account, towards the end of the day, at twilight. It was wrong, perhaps,

but there was such a noise at home. If I looked as though I were thinking of anything, they all used to say: 'Suzanne is up in the moon.' I was really in Paradise," added the dreamer, in a broken voice.

"And what about your Louis? Did he get older with you, or has he remained young?"

"Oh, all that is over. It is as though I had had a dream and that I am now awake again. I remember it, but I cannot *go back into it.*"

"How old are you?"

"Fifty-five."

"Your dream was one of the flowers of youth and the season has gone by for you. It is merely that," I said.

"I should never have thought of speaking of all this to any one on earth. People would have said I was crazy and, with us, people have not much faith in those who are not like every one else."

She glanced at me with that expression of anguish which had struck me previously.

"I should like to know quite frankly whether you think that I was mad?"

"Mad!" I exclaimed. "Certainly not. What put that idea in your head?"

"Well, my sisters and my friends never had imaginations like that."

"Because they are not gifted to the same degree as you, but every one has more or less imagination. Do not children imagine things? They have little dinners, and leaves from the trees are their plates and dishes, pebbles are their cakes and they suck them with

conviction and even imagine that they have the taste of sugar."

"Yes, that is true."

"One day, a young English boy of fourteen told me about the boar hunt in which he had taken part. He had given his first proofs of valour, for it was he who had struck the fatal blow when the animal was run to earth. Whilst he was telling me all this, he held his foot in his hand and his blue eyes had a fixed look, as though he had a vision of what he was telling me. I knew it was all imaginary, but I had not the courage to tell him that I knew this. At present, he is the most honest of men. You see he was not mad at all. And what about novelists who are imagining all the time. I hope they are not mad?" I said, smiling.

"No, oh, no," said my companion with polite emphasis; "but what is it that causes all that?"

"What causes all that? Ah, my good Suzanne, we do not know anything about that yet. At the back of our foreheads, and underneath our craniums, we must have a crowd of organs with which we think, reason, love and *imagine*, that is we group together the pictures, just as you did in your youthful dream. We can quite well group them together, but we cannot give life to them. Only God can create what He imagines. All that we see, the sun, the stars, the plants, the flowers, the animals and men are all His *imaginations*."

"The sun, stars, flowers, birds — all the imaginations of God?" repeated the poor woman. Her face suddenly lighted up and she exclaimed: "Yes, yes;

oh, I understand. I loved Him well before, but now!—"

She could not finish her sentence and I saw her clasp her hands together, instinctively, in adoration.

"It is very curious," she said, "at church one never thinks of all that. We pray and pray and we do not know exactly to whom we are praying."

"That does not matter; it is better to pray wrongly than not to pray at all."

"I felt sure that, as you write books, you could explain things to me. Oh, what a weight you have lifted from my mind. The idea that I had been mad haunted me and made me feel ashamed."

"Shall I tell you what you are, Suzanne?" I said, smiling. "You are a woman who should have been a novelist and I am sure that you will go on *imagining* always."

The colour came quickly into my penitent's face.

"Yes, but it is not the same thing now. I only imagine that I have a little house in the country."

"And can you see it?"

"Yes, just as I see you, Madame. The wistaria is up to the very roof and, at the back, there are old trees and a deep well in which the moon can be seen. In the front garden there are quantities of flowers."

"Well, that dream may be realised," I said. "There is more likelihood of having a little house in the country than of having a perfect husband like your Louis."

"Not much more likelihood for me," said the woman, with a sad smile, continuing her work.

That day, when she left, she kissed my hand. It was I, really, who ought to have thanked her, for she had given me the rare enjoyment of coming face to face with one of the most beautiful miracles of Nature. How very beautiful it was, her dream of conjugal love. Out of delicacy, I had not dared question my penitent more closely, but how much I had guessed and admired! This brunette, of Latin race, had, thanks probably to some latent memory due to atavism, created for herself a husband with fair hair, blue eyes and a drooping moustache, a true Gaul. Solitary, although in the midst of her family, thanks to her innate refinement and to her contact with Madame Louis, she had only been able to love the creature of her imagination and she had loved him like a being of flesh and bone. She had felt herself clasped in his strong arms, her lips had been coloured by his rough kisses and, thanks to auto-suggestion, she had put into his mouth, the "beautiful words" which had been invented by her own brain. He had made her his wife. In the dark chapel to which she had gone, at the end of the day, the doors of her earthly Paradise, two rooms with windows gay with flowers had been opened for her and, whilst there, she had forgotten all the ugly realities of her life. It was in church that she could always *imagine* better. I was not at all surprised at that. The Catholic sanctuary, with its atmosphere saturated with soul, its profound silence, its cleverly arranged obscurity, lends itself to dreams as much as to prayer, for the two phenomena are of the same essence. This youthful dream which had upheld Suzanne has, perhaps,

prepared her for a higher destiny. I told her that she ought to have been a novelist; I fancy it is more likely that she is a future novelist.

The creative faculty of the dream, like all the psychical forces that we incarnate, has two currents and produces what we call, as we do not know any better, good and evil. The artist who would symbolise Life should make a statue with two faces; the one, grimacing and sorrowful; the other one, beautiful, serene, radiant. There are dreams which purify and dreams which degrade. In the darkness of the lower depths there are dreams of sunshine, and on the heights, in full sunshine, there are dark dreams! Millions of creatures, prisoners of poverty, disease, and so many, many others, too, could never endure the realities of Life if it were not for the magic of the dream. But, whether this be a gift of anger or of love, it must help forward our progress.

This faculty which makes us lead a double life is not, I am sure, the privilege of mankind alone. Animals dream in their sleep, there is no doubt about that. We have all of us seen the dog dreaming and heard his stifled bark. We have seen his legs move, as though he were about to run, his nose sniff, his lips move, either as though he were about to bite, or as though he were laughing. When the dog is awake, he must have his dreams too. Dogs cannot, as we can, group the various pictures together, but they see, as we do, the pictures their brains have received: their dreams are only *recollections*. The huge, wild beasts, shut up in their cages in the zoological gardens, dream. No one who

has watched and observed them could doubt this. With their heads stretched forward on their forelegs they see again, thanks to the films that have been formed under their skulls, the jungle with its living prey, the watering-places where they used to quench their thirst and, for a few moments, they forget their captivity.

In the kennels, the dogs see again all the fine hunts they have had, and even those of their ancestors. The picture of their absent master soothes them and makes the time of waiting seem less long. The horse, in its bad-smelling stall, sees the green pastures of its early life. The cat, in its dignified immobility, with its tail curled round its paws, and the ever-changing pupils of its eyes, gives us, more than any other animal, the certainty of the phenomenon. It undoubtedly dreams the sanguinary and loving dream of the feline race and it is just as well not to interrupt that dream, even by a caress, for when the cat rouses from it and stretches, all its claws are visible and reveal to us something of the nature of its dream.

It would require years of rumination for studying the dreams of man and of animals and I have only hours now at my disposal. Others will undertake this work, no doubt, and I envy them, for they will have glimpses of the light itself and I have only seen the shadow of that light.

CHAPTER VIII

ROMANTIC literature leads me on, necessarily, to love, which is its *leit motiv*, its battle horse. It nourishes love with its dreams, and it propagates it and makes it greater by means of words and pictures, for, if I am not mistaken, this is the chief function of romantic literature.

Love! I cannot help laughing at the idea of an old woman, like me, being brought face to face with love, for the purpose of studying, analysing and judging it. This seems to me both pathetic and comic. When we are young, we *feel* love, but it dazzles us so much that we cannot *see* it. At present, when the time of "the great serenity" is here, and I am outside of love's current for ever, I see it objectively. It appears to me so miraculous, so divinely conceived, that I would not exchange my present vision for the dreams of yore — and this is very fortunate for me!

No other people have had so scientific an intuition of love as the Greeks. All the discoveries we have made, and all those that we shall make, will reveal the eternal truth of it. The allegory with which it inspired the Greeks has been an inexhaustible source of wonderful creations for poets and artists. The modern mind can still draw from it. This truly divine allegory represents love as a child incarnating a giant force — the attractive force which unites beings and things, in order to make them produce new elements. Eros is the

little child whom we never think of mistrusting, whom we welcome with a smile. He throws his soft, supple arms around his victim and his embrace is that of an implacable master, a master with all the tyranny, egoism and inconstancy of a child. The very attributes: the quiver, the arrows, the torch, the bandage for the eyes, are symbols of living things. Like Eros, we are children, but our cerebral cellules incarnate creative force. Their radiations are the arrows which call love into being, or which kill it. Those radiations are the torch which kindles the passions and they produce mirages that are blinding.

Love is still an abstract thing to us. With more or less genius and more or less talent, the various poets, novelists, musicians and painters have *exploited* it. The word I employ is vulgar, but exact. These manufacturers of the ideal have even created artificial waves of it, and humanity has drunk of them and has, in some cases, been intoxicated by them. We might well think that everything that there is to say about Eros, comparatively speaking, has already been said, but, as a matter of fact, nothing has yet been said. I do not pretend to be able to pierce through the mystery of the nature of Eros, but the discoveries of these last years enable me to *imagine* more thoroughly and, at the risk of disgusting realists and being jeered at by our savants, I am going to tell what I have imagined. If there should be a few gleams of truth in what I am about to write, they will be due to pure intuition, as I am only a poor ignorant woman.

Where does this force come from which sometimes

steals into us treacherously, and sometimes bursts forth without any warning, the force which flings us into the arms of another creature, which unites us or reunites us to that creature for a few seconds of eternity? Where does this light come from which lights up our spring, our summer, our autumn even, and the memory of which suffices for warming the winter of our life? Where does this force come from which takes us up to the very summits and hurls us down into the abysses? Like the vital fluid, like the soul of the Universe, it comes from the Eternal God, from "our first motor." It is one of the radiations from this. The photographic plate can now catch the distant star. The day will come when an apparatus, sensibilised to an extreme degree, will register the divine wave and, in the meantime, we can, at any rate, comprehend its action. It penetrates the atom, the vegetal, the animal, man. Like the sun, it sets in motion the living germs that have been put into certain cerebral cellules and, out of creatures, it makes creators, *for love is a sentiment that has a sex, that even has two sexes.* I felt inclined to write: *Love is a sex that has a sentiment,* but I was afraid of letting myself be tempted by the pleasure of saying something more *piquant.* I called Eros to the bar and confessed and questioned him relentlessly. After which, I came to the conclusion that, generally speaking, with men it is the sex that has a sentiment, and that with women, it is the sentiment that has a sex. The question is not one of superiority, but of temperament. This accounts for the eternal difference between masculine and feminine love. When Nature has found the

way to synchronise them, they will be in perfect harmony. In the meantime, they frequently produce cruel discords. This definition must be a true one, as it explains the deeds and misdeeds of love, its animality and its ideality, its baseness and its elevation, its instinctive and profound jealousy, its inconstancy, its fidelity, its cowardice and its bravery. It explains its contrasts which have always astonished us, contrasts which have made philosophers speculate, and which have fed the imagination of novelists.

Have there ever been any examples of purely spiritual love, such as that of which Plato, the great idealist, dreamed? There has been metaphysical love such as the Christian Catholic soul *tried* to produce. Have there ever been examples of sexless love? I do not think so at all. In order to be convinced of this, we have only to read the adorable romance of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal again. It is a romance of saints. We see how Eros dissembled, how he disguised himself! It was all in vain, though, that he tried to hide under the violet robe, and under the nun's dress, he betrayed himself constantly, and the marvellous thing is that now, after three centuries, he can be felt in those letters from the prelate. He comes out of them living, fresh, young and passionate, just as though he had only been imprisoned there yesterday. How fine Life is! Although the Bishop of Geneva and Madame de Chantal had risen to a great height, they did not succeed in leaving the terrestrial atmosphere, and their love had a sex like that of the ordinary mortal, but with this difference, that they were its absolute masters and

not its slaves. This alone was very fine for poor Terrestrians. Listen, for instance to this:

He.—"My very dear mother, all mine, *moy-mesne*. . . . Good morning, my only one, my very dear, incomparably dear, daughter."

She.—"Your dear soul, my very dear father, my only one—"

In order to have such expressions as these, the complete fusion of their beings must have taken place in an occult way. We know nothing yet of the workings of Nature. In their letters, there is no doubt a great deal of *literature*. St. Francis de Sales was above all in love with the *woman*, or rather with the feminine soul. I have tried, in vain, to imagine what the meetings of these lovers, of so rare a kind, must have been like, lovers who exchanged such tender sentiments by letter. Must they not have felt intense emotion when they were actually in the presence of each other? Must they not have felt a certain embarrassment, too? But the Bishop, with his thumb, could make the sign of the cross on the forehead of "his unique daughter," the mother superior could kiss the episcopal ring of the father, "dearly well beloved," and, by means of these mystical gestures, they would have called down God between them. They probably talked of their common work: "The Visitation," and in this way they could escape from themselves. The elaboration of this work must have been, I feel sure, a powerful derivative. They gave it the tell-tale arms of a heart crowned with thorns and pierced by two arrows. These arms speak clearly enough. The two arrows were, you may be sure, those

of Eros. I feel sure that the profane god had never before been put to such a test.

The publication of the letters of St. Francis de Sales, is, I consider, a profanation, but they reveal unsuspected possibilities in human nature, and they have helped me to understand human nature better.

The phenomenon of the union of two beings, by love, is the most miraculous of all those that we are called upon to live. How do we love? How do we cease to love? Those are the two questions! The sap mounts in the human creature, and, at a certain epoch, which is determined by more or less rapid growth, the living cells, which incarnate the attractive force, begin their work. Their vibrations create, in the brain, a whole phantasmagoria of pictures, dreams and desires. By means of glances, smiles, words, droll little grimaces, they go, like the antennæ, in search of the brother or sister cellules which are to make their destiny happy or accursed. There is nothing in this world which appears to me more tragic than this unconscious pursuit. They frequently search a long time for their sister or brother cellules, some of them never find these and therefore remain sterile, but this is exceptional. For the majority, the miracle takes place, and it always takes place in a different manner. Sometimes it happens that those who are destined for each other meet in the midst of the densest crowds, through the closest network of radiations which are quite foreign to them. They make an impression on each other: the cellules of the man receive or catch the picture of the woman: the cellules of the woman receive

or catch the picture of the man and they are then invisibly united.

The phenomenon enters its second phase. Love is born. This hybrid sentiment has unique and very strange properties. It creates a sort of halo round its captives, which isolates them. They see themselves alone, like Adam and Eve, and they can no longer live outside this halo without suffering. It clothes them, and all which belongs to them, with a special fluid which transfigures them reciprocally, which accelerates the beating of their hearts, exalts their senses and their higher faculties, diffuses through their veins a paradisaical joy and, at certain moments, gives them an intoxication during which neither time nor space exists for them. Like the juice of poppy capsules, and of the grape, love, which is the juice of the human cellules, produces intoxication, an intoxication of Life, of the Beyond, that of Happiness itself. This intoxication does not last. If it did, it would stupefy or kill us. Many of those who have known it, endeavour to find it again by means of fresh communications, and it is just this which causes unfaithfulness. It is given to the most humble of creatures and to the greatest alike, and God be praised for this! Men and women of the people obtain it without many words. Arm in arm, they hold each other's hand. One comes across them like this seated on the benches of the public squares and parks. They see nothing of what is going on around them, as they are evidently elsewhere. I said, one day, to a country girl: "You and your sweetheart are very silent lovers!"

"Oh, we are too happy to be able to talk!" she replied, blushing.

Last Sunday, the chambermaid who waits on me in my hotel had been out for the day. When she came to my room in the evening, her face, which is very pretty, was so bright, beaming, as it were, with an inner joy, that I had the instantaneous impression of love. When I think that microscopic cellules can, under the action of invisible forces, produce paradisaical joys, or infernal tortures like jealousy, I am perfectly baffled, as I feel astounded and rather terrified.

During this communion which unites two creatures, physical exchanges take place, the profundity of which we little imagine, and these exchanges are necessary to Life. When this union has given to Life what it was destined to give, love either ceases or is transformed. This is the third phase of the phenomenon. And in this phase, what hidden heart-rendings there are, what desperate efforts to prolong happiness. Sometimes it is the picture of the woman that fades away the first, and the man then becomes indifferent to her. He neither sees her nor feels her any longer. Sometimes it is the picture of the man which disappears, and the woman regains her independence regretfully. In both instances it is a case of a burnt-out *ampoule*, a dead cellule. The man, or the woman, who continues loving, without any return being possible, drinks one of the bitterest cups that has ever been prepared for our poor humanity.

However wonderful love may be, it is not the noblest of our sentiments. It brings out the alloy which is

in our composition: our vanity, our egoism. We constantly hear people say that "without love the world would come to an end." I fancy that with only love, it would come to an end still more rapidly, not perhaps thanks to the lack of combatants, but through sheer wantonness, and its end then would be still more shameful.

To the majority of society men and women, love is scarcely more than a kind of sport. In the higher classes the Don Juans are the *cabotins* of Love. In the lower classes they are the hooligans of it. This type of love, which incarnates the dreams of puberty, which certain poets have idealised, is, in reality, one of the most contemptible and vulgar that exists. As to the passionate lovers, they are the romantically sentimental ones, whose temperament makes victims of them rather than heroes and heroines. We can forgive them much, because they have loved much.

Love, this master of the Universe, this divine master, has a whole crowd of grotesque features which show up the humour of Nature. One of these is the game which we now call flirtation and, in animals, the *pursuit*. It is most curious to study. The flirtation of adolescence, which is unconscious and instinctive, might teach the psychological doctor a great deal. Youthful flirtation is skilful and artistic, the woman is graceful at it, and the man ridiculous. The flirtation of men and women in their maturity is pitiful and the flirtation of old age odious. Just as there are, in the firmament, stars that are dying and stars that are extinct, so in our motor there are cellules that are dying and those

that are extinct. Those of youth and of sensual love, for instance, die normally towards the close of the summer of our life. With some individuals, they survive until the very middle of winter, and they only produce then repugnant anomalies, such as old men and women passionately in love.

Among the wrong ideas that circulate, that are repeated, thanks to the influence of suggestion, and that pervert people's judgment, there is one that I specially wish to denounce.

People are in the habit of saying that marriage is the tomb of love. The man, for it must have been a man, who first spread abroad this calumny, knew very little about love, and about human nature.

Marriage is, really, the touchstone of love. If this cannot stand the test of the intimacy of marriage, it is not of good alloy. When it has undergone the process of transformation, and come through this test triumphantly, it becomes conjugal love, and this is not only stronger than death, but stronger than old age. This is the love that cannot be killed by any disillusions, by physical and moral disrobing, by the horrors of disease, the repetition of the same gestures over and over again, nor even by deadly habit and custom, nor yet by time and wrinkles. It is the golden liquor which remains in the champagne glass when the fermentation froth has subsided, it is the very soul of the wine. If one takes the trouble to stir it with tender words, with timely little attentions, with intelligent coquetry, it will always give those lovely, many-coloured bubbles which excite and delight the palate. Conjugal love, like

friendship and all the other sentiments, must be cultivated. It is a beautiful plant which, only too often, the husband and wife let die, thanks to their ignorance about what it requires, their ignorance about Natural History. Sometimes they give this plant too much sunshine and sometimes too much shade. The sap has difficulty in mounting, the leaves lose the brilliancy of vigour and the poor corollas wither away without having given all the perfume they contained. People say then that it has been killed by marriage. No, it has been killed by the married couple.

I remember very well the impressions of a romantic man who, in spite of every one and everything, married a girl, with whom he had fallen in love. During the honeymoon, she contracted typhoid fever in a little Italian town. He had to nurse her himself, and so he saw her in all the physical humiliation which this terrible disease inflicts on its victims. After telling me all the incidents of this first conjugal trial, he added: "How little we know ourselves! I should have thought that I should have been disenchanted forever by such a thing and, on the contrary, I did not even feel the slightest disgust. I felt that Louise was not only a woman, but my wife, part of myself."

When I was a girl, I thought, and even said, that it would be absolutely impossible to continue loving a husband who snored. One afternoon, my little dog, Saïda, that I adored, was asleep at my feet and snoring most happily. I looked at him and listened with intense pleasure and, finally, knelt down beside him and said: "What a good sleep you are having, my darling!" and

then I added, foolishly: "And how well you snore!" An old friend of mine who happened to be there, and who had often heard my childish remark, began to laugh.

"You see," she said, looking at me over her spectacles, "when one is in love with one's husband, one thinks that he snores well too. Do you understand now?"

Yes, I understood.

"Conjugal love is very great then!" I said, amazed and inwardly delighted. On the objective screen, I can see myself now, sitting on my heels and making this pleasant discovery. And I can see myself at present, towards the end of my life, not sitting on my heels, alas, but at my writing-table, repeating for the benefit of my readers: "Conjugal love is very great!" The contrast between these two films amuses me, but makes me a little sad, too.

I know a fine pair of lovers. The man is ninety years old and the woman eighty-five. One day, urged on by my relentless curiosity, I asked this wife, who has had an exceptionally happy life, whether she would like to be young again? "Yes," she said promptly, "for one thing only, so that I might marry my husband again." I shook hands with Monsieur B——. "Your wife has just paid you the very finest compliment you have ever had," I remarked. He looked at me in a bewildered way, for he is deaf and had not heard the fine compliment. I repeated it to him and his face lighted up. The old couple exchanged a look and a smile which made

them young again for a few seconds. At the bottom of their glass, in which so little of the liquor remained, I saw the beautiful bubbles appear once more, with all the changing colours of the divine fluid.

A love marriage may become a marriage of reason and a marriage of reason may become a love marriage. This miracle takes place more often than we imagine. Marriage is the mingling of two lives, according to the beautiful, old expression. When the woman is no longer a woman to any one else, she still is to her travelling-companion, and will be to her last hour.

Outside marriage, Eros is a delightful child, but fickle, cruel and egoistic. In marriage, he is a man. He has the right of lighting the fire of the family hearth, that altar on which the Greeks and Romans always kept the fire burning. The head of the family alone had the privilege of adding fresh fuel to it and it could only be extinguished with the family itself. The so-called free-thinkers believe, or pretend to believe, that the marriage ceremony adds nothing to human happiness. They are mistaken, for it adds to it the consecration which gives it grandeur and dignity. That ceremony, by which two persons take the community as witnesses of their union and ask for the blessing of God and the protection of the law, makes of them and their offspring active members of that same community. Those who, for reasons which are always pitiful, dispense with all this, remain isolated, on the margin of life, as it were. The man, more than the woman, always feels a certain shame. It is easy, too, to prove

that there are more dramas, sorrows and crimes as the result of free love than of consecrated unions. This is not a chastisement, but a mere consequence.

The desire for other people's property is a primordial instinct, one of the principal instruments of the struggle which keeps up Life and gives shades to it, both on our own planet and, probably, on many others too. On my balcony, every day, I see certain sparrows which are more perverse, I might say more human, than the others. There is a table for them lavishly supplied with food, but they only covet the crumb that a brother is eating. I see such sparrows dart on that crumb, snatch it away in the most daring and pretty way possible, and finish it with evident enjoyment, as though theft made it more savoury. The instinct which makes a man desire his neighbour's wife is of the same kind. The ancestor was the victim of this instinct just as the husband of to-day is. The cave and the hut were dishonoured by adultery just as the house and the palace frequently are now-a-days. In the far-back times, there were, doubtless, daring and courageous love-thieves who carried Eve away with a high hand, who kept her, fed her, clothed her nakedness, made necklaces with which to adorn her, and gave her a couch of fleeces or of leaves. There were others who were weaker, less manly, and who stole into Adam's nest, whilst he was away hunting, and contented themselves with seducing his companion. The primitive struggle between males for the possession of a woman must have been ferocious, but it certainly had some grandeur about it; in our times it is paltry and, more often than

not, grotesque. From my point of view, in the theft of love, it is the thief and not the one who is robbed who appears ridiculous. This impression, which is absolutely sincere, is not on account of the moral sense, but of my sense of humour, which is always tickled by any disproportion. The deceived husband inspires me with pity, the lover either makes me laugh or he disgusts me, as he descends to the rank of the parasite. He is the man who hides under the conjugal bed, who comes out of some dark corner, haggard looking, livid with fright, adorned perhaps with spiders' webs, the man who may be turned out of doors in his pyjamas. He certainly makes me laugh. He may be the man too, who drinks out of another man's glass — and knows it — or the one who is in love with a woman whom another man is feeding, dressing and protecting. A man of this kind disgusts me. All this is ridiculous. I have also noticed that at the commencement of a *liaison*, the man always has a *glorious* air. After a little time, he does not hold his head quite so high, sometimes he goes about with a bowed head even, and his very moustache betrays his state of mind, which is by no means an enviable one. He gradually loses his self-assurance and his easy-going air, for he is no longer a master, but a slave. Dramatic authors and novelists do not see in this way, as they still have the ancestor's subjective judgment. When once they begin to look at life under the objective angle, that angle which shows up all things as they are, the lover will appear to them as the truly comic person in the adultery drama. He will be a new target for their flashes of wit, and they

will then become professors of morality. A finer and more beneficent evolution could not be imagined than that.

With the old Romans, the wife's misconduct did not stain the husband's honour, and that was only just. One may steal a man's wife, but one cannot steal his probity, his loyalty, all which goes to make what we call honour. The parasite may walk over his back and even over his head, without diminishing his genius or his intellectual power. The greatest of men have been deceived by the most insignificant. Cæsar and Napoleon were, but that did not lower them.

The husband only seems ridiculous to me when, instead of treating the lover to kicks and blows, like a common thief, he challenges him to a duel and thus gives him the opportunity of raising himself and of showing off his courage. The woman would soon cease to care for a man who had just been ignominiously knocked down, but she adores the one who fights for her sake. Weapons, too, ought to be reserved for nobler quarrels. If only the law compelled the lover to keep and maintain the woman he has stolen, love-crimes would be less frequent, but it is men who make the laws, and the gods who inspire them have constant need of elements for the struggle that we must live out.

No phenomenon of our existence shows up better than love and marriage the inanity and childishness of the belief in free-will, and the impossibility of it. There is no need to be very learned in philosophy to understand that the force which unites creatures could only be in the hands of their Creator. It is always the

Providence of God, Nature with a capital N which, by the right or the left hand, "gives this man to this woman and this woman to this man." It is Providence or Nature who separates them, who elaborates cruel dramas, delightful idylls, worthy or unworthy love affairs, happy marriages and woeful marriages. In the handling of this force which makes our fate for us, it reveals its combative spirit, the terrifying subtlety of its imagination, its humour, its severity and its mercy. It piles up obstacles between those to whom it has given irresistible affinities, it unites beings who are totally unlike each other, it yokes them together like dachshunds. One wants to go to the right, the other to the left; the one is quick and the other slow; the one scents things and the other is quite indifferent to everything. It is only after very many skirmishes, after a whole crowd of mutual concessions, that they manage to walk along side by side. If they cannot manage this, the stronger of the two slips his or her head out of the collar and escapes. This means divorce and unhappiness. And what a variety of themes the Divine Novelist gives us! We see certain heroes and heroines absolutely intoxicated with love. They consider each other perfect in beauty and goodness. As soon as the intoxication is over, they do not recognise each other; he is no longer *He* and she is no longer *She*. Destiny has played its game out, a man of worth has chosen a companion who is unworthy of him, and a superior woman has married an imbecile. What is still more disconcerting is that when Providence has arranged a fine human happiness, it destroys it again. The Will

which mingles lives in this way knows the physical and psychical chemistry of them, every amalgam can only be for one purpose, our progress and our happiness.

Many years ago I had an opportunity of seeing how Nature sometimes gives "this man to this woman and this woman to this man." Although I never thought then of studying the proceeding as a philosopher, it made an impression on me that I never forgot. My thoughts have often gone back to it and so revived it in my memory, probably for the sake of this chapter for which it was intended to help, as everything does help.

The incident took place at the house of a friend, in a town, the name of which I will not mention. After a small dinner-party, we were all in the drawing-room sitting round one of those wood fires, the gaiety of which those who come after us will never know. We were looking forward to the arrival of the after dinner guests, as we knew they would bring us the latest political and social news. Presently they began to arrive and, among others, a young lieutenant who was not one of the usual guests of the house. Our hostess made him very welcome. I heard him giving her news of his family and telling her how delighted he was at having been sent to the garrison he preferred. He was about twenty-six or twenty-eight, tall, slight, with plenty of muscle. He looked like a soldier and a gentleman. He had dark hair and a face with regular, strong features, of the aquiline type, softened by blue eyes with large pupils full of light and youth. Just as I was saying to myself that he must be, or that he would be,

in the future, loved passionately, a woman, who was a perfect vision of beauty, appeared in the doorway, framed, as it were, by the curtains. She stood still for a few seconds, probably to be admired. My retina had time to photograph her, so that she appears quite living to me now. I can see her quite well, in her princess robe of ivory satin. I can see her emeralds, her perfect shoulders, her beautiful features and her magnificent dark eyes. On her arrival, there was one of those eager movements in the drawing-room which are always accorded to the favourites of the hour.

"Pauline, all alone!" exclaimed the mistress of the house, advancing to meet her guest.

"Yes, all alone," answered Madame V——. "I ought never to come through your street on my way to the Opera, for, whenever I see the light in your windows, I am bound to come up. I cannot possibly help it. They are giving that blessed *Prophet*. Charles did not want to miss the overture, as he has a mania for overtures, so I asked him to drop me here. He will send the carriage back for me."

No, she ought not to have driven along that street, poor woman, for on that night, this street was to take her a long, long way! After talking to her for a few minutes, my friend, on turning her head, saw the young officer still standing up. She beckoned to him and introduced him to Madame V—— in a few friendly words. He bowed and kissed the ungloved hand she held out to him. I have no idea what philter Nature slipped into that kiss, but its effect was striking. I saw the young man turn pale and the woman blush, the

blue eyes gaze into the dark eyes, the dark eyes endeavour to shield themselves by lowering their lids and then, as though subjugated, surrender themselves to the blue eyes. It was a veritable short circuit. I had a sudden intuition that the two beings before me had just taken possession of each other. The idea made me smile stupidly. I was incapable then of understanding the real beauty of the phenomenon.

During the rest of the evening, the attitude of Madame V—— and of Count B—— confirmed the correctness of my intuition. I saw them stroll into the conservatory, leading out of the drawing-room, and talk to each other instead of joining in the general conversation. It was as though they were already wrapped round by the divine fluid and consequently indifferent to what people thought and said of them. The young wife forgot all about the Opera, the *Prophet* and her husband. She did not leave until about half-past eleven and the young lieutenant accompanied her to her carriage. This extraordinary conduct surprised even the older society people who were there. They felt that there was a scandal in the air, and they were not mistaken. It was not long before there was a scandal and a famous one. Madame V—— belonged to a very Puritanical set. She had passed through the fire of various ardent admirations without being scorched. She was the mother of a girl of fifteen, so that she ought to have been safe. When it was evident that she was in love with a mere lieutenant, a man much younger than she was, and in love to such a degree that she braved public opinion and seemed likely

to bring dishonour on her own family, the stupefaction became general. Conversation, everywhere, turned on her imprudence and the daring things she did. She was, nevertheless, treated with a certain indulgence, as she was really a good sort and then, too, she appeared so unconscious of her delinquencies and so frankly happy. This love affair was like the last flame of her youth. It gave a brilliancy, a warmth and a magnetism to her beauty which disarmed morality itself. Apropos of this, I was witness to what must certainly be a psychological rarity. Her husband's family, instead of joining in the chorus of those who blamed her, instead of disowning her, gathered round her, trying to cover her with all its respectability, saving her thus from going further astray and perhaps even from leaving home. I fancy that she had something to do with the departure of Count B——. He was promoted and, as soon as he was a captain, he was sent to another garrison. As to the husband, he was not like the husband on the stage, as he was quite aware of his wife's faithlessness, but religious faith made a super-man of him. It appears he was more afflicted at the thought of his wife losing her soul than at the thought of his dishonour. And in order to redeem this soul that was so dear to him, he prayed unceasingly and devoted himself to good works. This beautiful thing became known and soon gave rise to all kinds of stupid jeering. One day, I heard it being discussed by a few men of the world. One of them, who was an old sinner himself, suddenly said: "Well, all I can say is that any savage could do what either you or I would surely do in a

similar case, but to act in the way Charles is acting, one must be devilishly superior." The silence that followed this remark proved to me that it had struck home.

Fresh scandals had made people almost forget this one, when it was announced that Madame V—— was about to become a mother once more. This was a little too much. Society was seriously indignant and, as a proof of its own virtue, blamed this event unanimously. The unfortunate husband's family continued its heroic conduct and when the child, a fine boy, was born, it was welcomed like the most legitimate of offspring. Outsiders examined the poor baby's face eagerly, in order to discover the secret of its origin. Its blue eyes did not fail to call forth smiles and jokes of the worst taste possible.

After her confinement, Madame V—— had phlebitis. She had to lie down for some weeks and a clot of blood then proved fatal. Romantic people were quite sure that she had simply died of grief. A halo was soon formed round the beautiful dead woman, and her funeral was that of a victim of love and not of a guilty wife.

When I saw the little "intruder" again, he was ten years old, and his eyes certainly were blue, implacably blue, and they were so like Count B——'s eyes that they gave me a shock. I understood immediately the atrocious grief that this living proof of his wife's treason must cause M. V——. The faithlessness of a wife had never seemed to me so criminal before. When once I had become convinced that we do not make our destinies, I understood that Madame V—— had merely

lived out one of the plans of Providence. I often saw her again in my mind, just as she was that evening when she arrived in my friend's drawing-room, beautiful, happy and unconscious, oh, so unconscious of what awaited her. I saw her smiling, as she held out her hand for the kiss which contained her warrant of dishonour and death, and I went on my way asking myself "Why? Why all this?"

Was it the reply to this question that came to me eighteen years later? Thanks to what we wrongly call chance, I had occasion to go back to that town where the tragic episode had taken place. I had scarcely arrived when I heard people talking of Captain V——. A dangerous expedition to the heart of Asia had made of him the hero of the day. The scandal which had attended his birth was forgotten, for so many similar waves had swept over that one. His mother's husband had been dead a long time. His elder sister, who had been like a mother to him, was enjoying his triumph in perfect ignorance. The young explorer was to tell the story of his expedition as a public lecture. My desire to see and to hear the blue-eyed "intruder" can readily be imagined. The lecture was a society event and, in order to get a seat, I had to take steps which went against the grain. This did not deter me and I succeeded in obtaining a seat. My novelist's heart beat as fast as the heart of a woman in love when I saw a distinguished, martial figure appear on the platform, a figure which was the living reproduction of the handsome lieutenant I had admired one evening, thirty years previously. The aquiline line of the nose, the blue

eyes with large pupils, the bold turn of the moustache, nothing was wanting and, on this manly face, I fancied I could see the mother's pretty, fleeting smile. The thin face, tanned with the sun, and slightly yellow, the precocious wrinkles and the few hairs that had turned prematurely white told of the suffering that had been endured, of the effort that had been given. The result of the effort was shown to us by photographs and the cinematograph. On the screen we saw landscapes that were both beautiful and desolate-looking, and then, low on the ground, carved stonework, pieces of columns, steps and all the ruins of a forgotten city. I looked from the picture to the lecturer and I understood, or I believed that I understood. In order to create this agent of force, Providence had undoubtedly needed certain physical and intellectual qualities. It had only been able to obtain these by mingling the lives of the young lieutenant and Madame V——. It had done this and it had a right to do it. It seemed to me that I had the " because " to my " why." I felt a little pride when I said to myself that I alone, in this big assembly, knew Nature's secret.

Did I alone know it? Just at that moment, my eyes fell on an officer of high rank, a general, who was at the very end of the row in which I was sitting. I had an inward start and was sure that I was not alone in knowing Nature's secret, for Nature's collaborator was there. His hair and moustache had turned grey, his complexion was yellow, his eyelids wrinkled and there were dark circles round his eyes, but, with his aquiline profile, his upright figure and his racial slenderness, he

still gave a fine impression of vigour. I did not hear another word of the lecture. This man heard it, though. I would have paid a high price for some apparatus capable of registering the radiations of his cerebral cellules. What a magnificent scale of sentiments and emotions it would have transmitted for me, a scale in which there would have been paternal affection, pride, grief, and regret. I could only catch the reflex action of all those beautiful sentiments. I saw the delicate nostrils dilate, the moustache quiver, the white gloved hands, resting on the hilt of the sword, relax their hold and then clench the hilt more firmly. Was he living over again the love of his early manhood? Could he see the woman again whose life he had taken? I hoped so. How little he guessed that, just a few steps away from him, there was an eye-witness of that first meeting, of that love at first sight, the result of which had been the birth of his son. With the last word of the lecture, the General rose. I thought he was going at once to the platform, like many others, to shake hands with the lecturer, Captain V——, but he stole away by a side door. I knocked against my neighbours in my great haste to follow him. I saw him hail a carriage, fling himself down and throw back his head as though to take a long breath. He had no doubt been afraid of betraying himself; he had been afraid, too, lest the resemblance between himself and the lecturer should strike one of his own contemporaries and recall to his mind the famous adventure.

Life had just explained Life to me. It would always explain it, I fancy, if only we knew how to think, and

if we could only watch it long enough. Law-breaking love affairs, and whirlwinds of passion bring to Life a huge contribution of grief and sorrow, and Life has need of all this probably. Did not Jesus know this when he uttered the strange words: "Woe unto the world because of offences! *for it must needs be that offences come.*"

Like the heroines of the Greek theatre, we are only great because we live out our destinies, and because these destinies are part of the divine plan. Phèdre, obeying her own instincts, would have been a vicious and vulgar woman, but Phèdre, as Destiny's holocaust, excites our pity and admiration. She is invested with the tragic beauty which has inspired masterpieces.

The Providence of God is not blind, but far-seeing; it cannot have any other end in view than our final good, as we are not doomed to death, but doomed to progress. The day will come when man will no longer see Eros as a child; man will then be aware of his true rôle, of his divinity. From that day forth he will no longer dare to drag love through the gutter or to debase it by pornography. He will, on the contrary, bring the purest incense to its altar. However far off that day may be, it will come eventually, for Eros and man must evolve and must grow.

CHAPTER IX

After Love — Religion! I have now arrived with my poor little barque, "The Why," at the most dangerous cape of my cruise, that of Religion. It ought to be the Cape of Good Hope, but it is still the Cape of Tempests. I did my utmost to avoid it, partly from intellectual laziness and partly out of self-distrust. "The Other One" brought me pitilessly back to it, and there is no way of resisting "The Other One."

The psychical force which attracts man towards God, the divine magnetism, is one of the greatest forces of the Universe. It acts on the human soul like other forces act on the Ocean and on the Earth itself; it rouses the soul, it stirs it to its very depths and it has created that spiritual dream, Religion. This dream has gone on developing and has been transformed with the ages. It has been as varied as the different races, as the different individuals. It has been affected by climate, by surroundings, by the conditions of existence. It has been coarse and *naïf*, cruel and gentle, beneficent and harmful. It has been, above all things, an instrument of struggle, of progress and of civilisation. The Terrestrian was to be not only a manufacturer of stories, but a manufacturer of gods. In some of his cerebral cellules, strange figures took shape, some of them hideous, grimacing, of every kind of ugliness, and then of every kind of beauty. He has reproduced these

figures in clay, in wood, in brass, in gold and in silver. He has lent them his own feelings, his virtues, his vices; he has given them his soul. And, thanks to an incomprehensible auto-suggestion, they became living for him, they became his masters, his gods. And in front of these gods, which had come from his own brain and been made by his own hands, he worshipped and implored. He imagined that they were endowed with supernatural power. In order to be in favour with them, he offered them the best of his possessions, he built altars, chapels and temples of all styles to them. Thanks to this miraculous illusion, when our tiny planet passes in front of the beautiful constellations of its spring, summer, autumn and winter, it presents to them church and cathedral spires, cupolas and domes of pagodas and of mosques. And these spires and cupolas, invisible in space, are nevertheless the antennæ, which, like those of wireless telegraphy, put it in communication with the Beyond, with the very soul of the Universe.

The people of the nation say: "All religions are good," and they are right. They frequently are right, for the soul of the people was sown with elementary truths. Yes, all religions are good, and all of them have been and are necessary. They ennoble, and they even confer nobility on man, as they give him a special dignity, for they create two wonderful forces within him: faith and hope. All religions, even the very crudest, contain a spark of revelation. Each one is a beam from the same fascicle of light. In this one, just as in the Roman fasces, there is always a hatchet, as we are still barbarous children. Some day, perhaps,

love will be found there, and, on that day, we shall know more than we now do about Life.

In the various communities of the Terrestrians, there have been some beings on whom the divine force has acted in a special way. They have had metaphysical dreams, just as the novelist has romantic dreams. From the substance of these dreams, they have drawn doctrines and laws and then, endowed with a mysterious power, they have subordinated millions of creatures. Every religion is the metaphysical dream of a nation. Among the great spiritual dreams of the Earth, was the Egyptian one which created Osiris, the God unique, beautiful, just and perfect, a dream in which we have a glimpse of the ladder of progression and of eternal life.

Then there was Zoroaster's dream, and a very profound one it was. The religious legislator of Persia attributed all the events of this world to the struggle of two primordial principles of Good and Evil, and, at the end of the centuries, he promised the victory of Good. He saw, in purifying fire, the symbol of divinity. His religion is still professed in India by the Parsees, who have preserved its elevated morality. A Hindu lady translated its catechism for me, and it is the purest Christianism.

There is the pantheistic dream of Brahma and that of Buddha, the reformer, who recognises as God "the great All in All." This is a dream which is clouded over and disfigured by endless superstitions. Its bewildering profoundness conceals, perhaps, the secret of our future.

There have been the fantastical, exaggerated dreams of the Phœnicians and of the Assyrians. Then there was the great philosophical dream of the Greeks, which the Romans were to make their own, amplifying it and taking away from it its characteristic mark. This was the fine dream, the immortal light from which still shines for us, whilst its waves were destined to mingle with those of Christianism.

There was the monotheistic dream of Moses, inspired by Egyptian mythology, which contained the germ of a strange and foreign flower, of the Christianism that we are still living at present.

There was the dream of Jesus of Nazareth, whose mystic Word, of elevated spirituality and of pure morality, embodied itself on the banks of the Tiber, and gave to the Western world an all powerful religion and Church.

Then finally, there was the dream of Mahomet, inspired by Judaism and Christianism. This was both gentle and humane at its origin, but it developed into the dream of an ambitious and cruel conqueror.

And in all these dreams, which are the chief branches of that unique tree, Religion, there has been the incarnation of divinity. Man has always felt "God with him." This conception existed in the mind of the ancestor with the low, receding forehead, and it exists in the mind of the Christian with his high, straight forehead. This gives matter for meditation to the thinker.

When I felt the direction in which the current was urging on my barque, I began to read Mythology, the Bible and the New Testament once more. I read them

all straight through, as they ought to be read, in order to be understood. They gave me the impression of a rich embroidery woven in green, purple and silver. Nature will add gold to it later on. What I read made all the phases of the metaphysical dream of humanity pass before my objective mind. It seemed to me that I saw the soul of the Terrestrian crawling for a long time on the ground, then getting up and falling again, rising once more and arriving at Monotheism, which is a synthesis, then practising, with Christianism, soaring and hovering, the only kind of flight which can give a perfect balance. It is far from having attained this balance as yet. These successive efforts touched me very deeply and, when I realised that all mythologies, with their fables, all religions, with their dogmas, and all sects, with their beliefs, had come from certain cerebral cellules of our motor, worked on by divine force, my amazement was boundless. I had commenced this reading without any enthusiasm, as I still remembered that boredom and disgust which lessons that are not understood always give us in our childhood and youth. My mind had, no doubt, been prepared now to receive these lessons, as before long I was captivated by them. I felt that I was in the very midst of the living *work* of the *Wonderful Romance*. I went on from admiration to admiration, from discovery to discovery. It seemed as though I were drinking a generous wine, a famous Burgundy, and all other books seemed to me as tasteless as water.

As a school-girl I had never had the Catechism prize, but always the one for Mythology. My mother told

me the legends of Christianism and my father those of Paganism, and the respective wonders in each created the most disconcerting confusion in my brain. I knew the names of all the personages of Olympus. Those gods who came down to earth, in fiery chariots, and who took, at will, any form they chose, fascinated me and seemed to me like the true gods. More than once, I have put a few coppers into the hand of some old beggar woman, thinking that she might, perhaps, be a goddess incognito.

I had a special affection for Zeus, because he had been persecuted when he was a little child. I could see him being carried off by his mother to an isle of flowers, and being nourished by a white goat with golden horns. I envied him his nurse and still more the fine warriors who guarded his cradle, clanging their shields to prevent his cries reaching the ears of old Chronos who wanted to kill him. The child Zeus, threatened by Chronos, and the child Jesus, threatened by Herod, were mixed up in my imagination, and my worship went from one to the other, without the least scruple.

It is thanks to these indelible childish impressions, which all " concur " in our destiny, that I have always had the Iliad and the Odyssey with me. I have often read them through again at intervals of a few years. As my understanding increased, I discovered fresh beauties, which were so many revelations, in them. Whenever I opened them again, they always took possession of me in a curious way, making me lay aside any other book. This time, the last, undoubtedly, that I shall ever read them, I have thoroughly understood that won-

derful Bible of the Greeks, and it seems to me to be one of the great things of this world. I went so far as to *conceive* that I was living again the vision of a brain dead three thousand years ago, the brain which had perhaps possessed the greatest number of ideal-weaving cellules. What a relish this gave to my reading! The novelist who feels the need of a lesson on humanity should go back to this immortal book, in which Homer puts on the scene, with the naturalness of a realist, all the gods and all the goddesses of Olympus, all the princes and all the peoples of Greece. The poet is so thoroughly conscious of the difficulty of his task and of his human ignorance, that, in a touching prayer, he asks the Muses and the goddesses for inspiration.

Whatever learned men may tell us, Homer, who had been adopted by a schoolmaster, must have been able to write. When Nature closed his eyes, in order to render his inner vision more intense, he must have dictated his songs to some scribe, and so transmitted the beautiful films which his recollections and his imagination created behind his forehead. He was not only a poet, but a great artist, a painter, a sculptor, and an admirable colourist. He clothes the gods and goddesses with light. His favourite heroes are tall, broad-shouldered men with beautiful bodies, and, above all, with long, fair hair and, when he speaks of some of his dead, he tells us of their dazzlingly white breasts. He clothes his warriors in superb tunics and puts helmets, with plumes and tufts of feathers, on their heads. He gives them shields of precious metal, shoulder belts richly

embroidered and fastened with silver hooks, and mantles of purple tints. Compare all that with the uniforms of our modern warriors; their scanty plumes look as though they had been intended for children. The chiefs of the Trojans and of the Greeks had superb war-chariots and swift horses "with golden manes." Their couches are made with "soft skins, with coverings of brilliant colours and with the finest linen." Who would have thought of them having sheets? Two chiefs, after plunging in the sea, get into "baths of polished brass, in order to refresh themselves." We are struck with admiration on reading the description of Juno's chariot and of Vulcan's armour. The suggestion of this genius is such that one hears "the bellowing doors of Olympus" open, to make way for the celestial messenger, Mercury, "shod with his beautiful winged heels," and for Minerva, bearing "the unchangeable Ægis from which float a hundred golden fringes woven artistically, each one of which is worth a hecatomb." One has, to an incomparable degree, the impression of invisible, but living, forces directing the superb hand to hand combats of the Greeks and Trojans. One hears with sorrow, "the Earth resound for a long time under the armour of the fallen foe." And I, the most vegetarian of carnivorous beings, I felt, to my horror, my nostrils dilating with the odour of the Homeric feasts, at which "the succulent flesh, sprinkled with the wine of libations, roasted on a spit of five rows, in front of the fire made of leafless branches."

There is an astonishing knowledge of humanity and of life running through the Iliad. In no other poem

is there as much blood shed and in no other poem are there so many tears wept. It must be that tears were not considered a sign of weakness. In the Odyssey, there is weeping in every page! Homer was as fond of moral beauty as of physical beauty, and he adorns his heroes with it lavishly. He sings of friendship more than he does of love and he is divinely chaste. Helen's adventure is treated in an extraordinarily refined way. He represents her as "covered with veils of dazzling whiteness." He gives her a "robe as odoriferous as nectar." Paris is not her lover, but her husband. She has her nuptial room in the palace of Priam, whom she calls "dear father." The poet makes of Paris, "with the delicate neck," a weak somewhat uncertain being. "He hides, even among the Trojans," in order "to escape Fate." Menelaus, "with the strong loins," is always valorous like a true hero. It is he who carries off the body of Patroclus from the Trojans. Helen has all the remorse of the good woman. We feel this when she says: "Would to Heaven that I had chosen the most cruel death, when I left my nuptial bed, my brothers, my only daughter and all the kind friends of my youth." Later on, when Paris returns to her conquered by Menelaus, her wounded vanity and her regrets inspire her with the most scathing reproaches: "You have come out of the combat like this!" she exclaims, "why did you not rather perish there, killed by the hand of the valiant warrior with whom my destiny was united!" She was reconquered by her first husband long before the fall of Troy.

On reading over again this exquisite romance, the

psychology of which is so true, I remembered going to a performance of *La Belle Hélène* at one of our Parisian theatres, some years ago. I overheard an Englishman, of about forty years of age, say to his friend: "Only the French would be capable of writing that parody. It is a profanation!" When he saw Menelaus unfold his handkerchief, marked as it was with the armorial bearings of deceived husbands, I saw his neck get very red and I heard him say to his friend: "I cannot stand this nasty thing any longer. I am going—" He got up at once and boldly left the theatre. I pitied him for not being able to laugh at the delightful nonsense, but I ought to have pitied myself!

In the Iliad and the Odyssey, Homer has transmitted the Hellenic dream to us, a dream of the "Great Initiated Ones," full of clever symbols, of wonderful revelations, the outcome of which has been a whole metaphysical world. After studying it more closely, I have discovered, to my great stupefaction, that it is not, and never was, polytheistical.

Zeus was seated on one of the highest summits of Olympus. He was a god, but he was not God, for above him was Destiny, *against whose will* he could do nothing and to *whose laws* he was submitted. Greek thought then had had a glimpse of a supreme God—*the God that it does not describe.* Like us, it had felt the attractive force of this God through numberless hierarchies, and, like us, it was monotheistical. Its conception of Zeus = Jupiter, of Apollo, Athene = Minerva, of Venus = Genetrix, suffices for revealing to

us the long distance which the human mind has already travelled.

Zeus is the generator of the physical and moral forces, of all that is good and of all that is evil. The progress of humanity is the work of Zeus. He comes down incognito among men, in order to civilise them, to teach them kindness, charity, the laws of hospitality. He allows even beggars to ask all this in his name, and it is never refused to them then. He delegates a share of his authority to kings, thus establishing the divine right. He then institutes faith in the given word, reveals the duties of justice, and causes remorse to be born in the conscience. Is not all this the rôle of our Providence?

Apollo, too, is an admirable creation. He is the son of Jupiter and he is the Light, and, because he is the Light, he can give Life and Death. Because he is the Light, he can purify and save souls. Because he is the Light, he creates poets, musicians and artists. Because he is the Light, he is sovereign beauty, vigour and grace! Is there not an astounding scientific revelation in this ideal?

Athene = Minerva, the virgin goddess whom Phidias carved in gold, in ivory and in brass, who inspired the beauty of the Parthenon, is the daughter of Jupiter, one of his emanations. She springs from his brain, like a flash of lightning, provided with the lance for attack and the shield for defence. And this flash is Thought, Intelligence and Wisdom. She is armed for war and for peace. In war, she fights like an ardent

Amazon; whilst in peace she is once more the civilising woman, she protects and develops industry, teaches the artisans secrets and guides the shuttle of the weaver. As she is Wisdom, she is always young, strong and serene; and as she is Wisdom, she carries victory in her hand. She appears to be more interested in human beings than any other goddess was. Homer shows her "pulling the long hair of Achilles," to remind him to be prudent when quarrelling with Agamemnon. In the Odyssey, she performs a very pretty miracle. "She keeps the sun back in the waves of the sea for the sake of Ulysses and Penelope, as she wants to prolong their night of love." Does not this idea reveal an elevated philosophy?

And that adorable Venus = Genetrix — the mother! In marble and with beautiful lines, the creator of the Venus of Milo has shown her in all her nobility. She has ample loins and divinely harmonious proportions, and with her the sanctuary of maternity is veiled. Her proud, tender face was reflected, no doubt, in the shield that protected her. As she is the mother, she is also Venus = Victrix, victorious Venus. She personifies the triumph of love. Is not that Truth symbolised?

The great mass of people could not mount all at once straight to the Infinite and, therefore, needed divinities who were not so far away from them. The poet, with his fertile imagination, wove legends around his gods, he invented genealogies for them and gave them families. Their love affairs and their wonderful adventures would appear grotesque, if they were not so many allegories. He gave them a body and made

them seem living and familiar. He could not explain the sudden leaps of good and bad fortune in his own destiny and so he attributes these to the caprices of the Higher Powers, and endeavours to render these Higher Powers favourable by means of sacrifices. When man cannot get to the supreme God, he makes the supreme God come down to him. This phenomenon has been reproduced in all religions, in Christianism even. In this childish, and at the same time grandiose, Western dream, men lived the struggle of the gods, and the gods lived the struggle of men; divinity and humanity were mingled together like the water and the wine in the chalice of the Catholic priest. And thanks to this, waves and waves of adoration, of faith and of hope have been created. It has raised up temples with pure lines, the very fragments of which are as precious as so many parchments of nobility. It has infused into a whole nation a vigour and a force which gave it the finest victories. It produced, in this way, that wisdom which we call philosophy. It created schools for the culture of the soul, such as that of the Stoics, in which men trained themselves to virtue, austerity and contempt of pain and suffering. In the thirteenth century, it was still so living that Dante, for his songs, invokes "good Apollo, the gods, the goddesses and the Muses," just as Homer had done more than two thousand years before. This dream has produced accumulators of beauty, harmony, art and thought which still supply us with superior energies. There are doctors who prescribe for certain of their neurasthenic patients a reading of Epictetus and of Marcus Aurelius,

as a spiritual remedy. The Hellenic dream did still more than this, for it prepared the way for Christianism, its own future enemy. This is a striking revelation of that work of Providence which creates in me perpetual admiration.

When one leaves Mythology and turns to the Bible, one has, like Dante at the beginning of his journey, the impression of "a dark, thickly wooded, rough forest which gives one constant terror," "la selva oscura selvaggia aspra e forte che nel pensier rinuova." I knew the Bible, that is, the Old Testament, like most people of Latin race, chiefly by its more celebrated verses. I read it for the first time when I was in England — and I soon fell under its Oriental charm. I felt its psychical power to such a degree as to be susceptible to the special fluid which seems to emanate from its pages in touching them. Notwithstanding this, I did not understand its philosophy or its real force. Its conception of the Eternal God seemed to me strangely childish and shocked, more than it edified, me. At present, thanks to my objective vision and to my thoroughly determinist views, the Judaic dream appears to me immense and as rigid as a cast. It was a necessary dream. Its effects and its consequences prove this amply. It produced a grand symphony and for a long time we shall go on living out the vibrations of this.

Moses had been taught in Egypt and it was from there that he had his belief in one God only; it was from there that he had the symbolical legend of the fall of man and all the persons of the drama of Eden.

He left the doctrine of the Trinity alone and also that of the immortality of the soul, which Christianism was to find again later on. In spite of the burning bush, the thunder and the lightning of Sinai, the religious and social laws of the Decalogue contained in the five books of Moses, in that of Joshua and even in that of Judges, Jehovah does not appear as the God of the Universe. He is the God of Israel, who, so that the Hebrews should not leave Egypt with empty hands, said: "Every woman shall borrow of her neighbour and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians."

He was the God of a shepherd people. He knew the number of their cattle, he thought of their flocks. He was the God of a people of tribes. He fights first with one and then with another, just as the gods of Olympus fought now with the Greeks and now with the Trojans. He presides over the distribution of the plunder of war, always reserving the largest share for the family of Aaron, the brother of Moses. He is the God who caused the sun to "stand still in the midst of heaven upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon," in order to permit Joshua to avenge himself upon his enemies. He is the God who, at the taking of Jericho, ordered that all should be burnt except the silver and gold and the vessels of brass and iron, which were to be reserved for the treasury of the Eternal, and this meant for the Levites. He is above all the God of the law of retaliation, for He said: "An eye for an eye,

a tooth for a tooth, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

As the nation is gradually formed, so the conception of Jehovah becomes more and more elevated. He is the "All-Powerful, the King of Kings." He is no longer the God of one people, but the God of all humanity, and humanity, personified by Job, addresses him direct, exposes his ills to him, the injustice of things and asks his sorrowful questions. He asks in anger: "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away mine iniquity?" Exasperated by his misery, he curses the day he was born and goes so far as to say: "*My soul is weary of my life.*" People tell him of the almightiness of God, of the impossibility of fathoming His plans. They promise him that he will forget his sufferings, but he disdains these futile consolations and declares that God must not be defended by lies. He seems to be awaiting a promise and even asking for it, the promise of the Resurrection, of immortality, but the promise does not come, it was not to come then, and the great man, in his affliction, cries out in his bitterness: "So man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." I know nothing more tragic than the silence with which this reproach is received. The book of Job is of incomparable beauty. It seems as though all the past, present and future waves of human suffering had passed through the soul of the sacred poet.

In the Psalms, the inspiration is warmer and more

consoling. Jehovah appears there as the God of the Universe, of Nature, the God "clothed in light," who created the face of the earth and who renews it. Humanity still complains, but it has approached nearer to its Creator, it knows Him better and, with David, words of love, faith and hope come from its heart, as in that adorable canticle: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

With Solomon and in the Books of Ecclesiastes and the Prophets, the Judaic dream reaches its highest point. It takes on a philosophical breadth which could not have been foreseen in the early days. Jehovah now appears as the God of supreme Wisdom. He instructs man and he sends magnificent and symbolical visions to His initiated ones, and puts into their mouths words of great force. His prophets announce to men more kindness, justice, love and charity. The psychical currents bring to them the picture of Him who is to come, the *films* of the drama of the Passion and, strangely enough, they seem to suffer with Christ, in their soul and in their flesh. Science will explain this fine mystery to us some day, and perhaps very soon. In the poem of the Old Testament, we can follow the upward movement of the human mind through all the obscurity of its childhood, and this upward movement is infinitely touching and wonderful. The poets who composed it were thoroughly and divinely inspired. They gave men the immense consolation of being able to complain of God — to God Himself — and of seeking in His replies the hope which they needed. It is this which makes the Bible the book of militant humanity; and this is the

secret of its occult and beneficent power. Then, too, as usual, the romantic dream mingles with the spiritual dream. The first part of the Bible is strewn with legends, with stories, animated by heroes and heroines. The Song of Songs flings into it words which are like the sparkle of diamonds and rubies. One must be endowed with the imagination peculiar to the theologian if one is to see in this the symbol of Christ's love for the Church. In the treasure-trove of Oriental poetry, there are numbers of Songs of Songs, and they are sung on the thresholds of the tents, on the outskirt of the desert. These waves of metaphysical beauty, which run through the sanguinary and voluptuous history of the Israelites, purify it like an electric current and tower above it so much that they make us forget its crimes.

With curious pleasure I saw the *green thread* of Mythology appear again in the purple of the Old Testament. I saw a number of its allegorical figures, such, for instance, as the serpent, from which, according to Hindu symbolism, the *terrestrial globe* springs. I saw the thunder and lightning of Zeus, the Prince Satan who comes from Persia and whom we see conversing familiarly with Jehovah. Then there were the Titans, and the passage which brings them on to the scene caused me a veritable thrill. In the sixth chapter of Genesis, we read: "And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the *sons of God* saw the daughters of men that they were fair and they took them wives of all which they chose." Further on:

"There were giants in the earth in those days: and also after that, when the *sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Was it not from this that Christ was called Son of God? What an awe-inspiring profoundness that gives to our history!

Modernists may dip into the philosophy of the Old Testament and they will find plenty of material for them. They will find thoughts such as this: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" The following is a promise which will gladden the hearts of the pacificators, it ought to be inscribed on the pediment of the Palace of The Hague: "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

And what magnificent expressions one finds too! Job says: "All the while the spirit of God is in my nostrils." I found again, in the Old Testament, a quantity of those sayings which came from lips that living coals had touched, sayings which are imprinted on the human soul and that generations have transmitted to each other, phrases that I learnt from my mother and that I repeat in my turn: "For He maketh sore and bindeth up." "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord." And on realising that, among so many helpful words, there is no plain and clear promise which gives us the hope of immortality, one is disconcerted and one truly feels "in a

dark, rough, wild forest." Did Moses fear that such a belief might intoxicate the voluptuous imagination of the Hebrews and inspire them to create another Olympus? That is quite possible. It is God who chooses the spiritual nourishment of mankind. In Judaism, punishments and rewards are restricted to temporal life. God closed the doors of the *terrestrial Paradise* to Adam and Eve, but He did not close the doors of the *celestial Paradise*, and in Genesis there is not, and could not be, any question of the Redemption, as that would have implied a future life. It is by spiritualising the Messiah that the Apostles and the theologians have linked the New Testament to the Old Testament. In the romantic dream, this would be considered a happy thought; in the metaphysical dream, it is called a revelation. Is this trickery? No, it simply means that the human mind was growing, that is all. The belief in the Redemption was to be the corner-stone of the Christian edifice, the principal agent of the evolution which was to blend the Oriental soul with the Occidental soul.

On reading the last lines of the Biblical poem, one sees "the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings," and one sees, as did the Florentine poet: "the summit of the dark valley already clothed with the rays of the planet which guides us faithfully along every path." These rays were those of the Christianism which had sprung up.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTIANISM! Its ethics already existed with the Egyptians. The examination which the Soul that appeared before Osiris had to undergo is a proof of this. In order to be absolved and admitted to see the Divine Majesty face to face, it had to prove that it had "respected the gods, showed equity to all free men, kindness to slaves and charity to the poor and weak. If it could not prove this, it was condemned, submitted to tortures and mercifully allowed to be lost in the Néant."

When Persia, thanks to Zoroaster, held the record for wisdom, it celebrated the fête of equality every year. The King mingled with the crowd and talked with the more useful of his subjects. Agriculturists and artisans sat at his table and at that of his satraps. He would say to them: "Thanks to your labour, we have our food and, thanks to us, you have tranquillity and ease. We are necessary to each other; let us, therefore, live at peace like brothers." This did not prevent the big brothers from oppressing the little brothers, but the ideal was there. It has, perhaps, always existed in the soul of this earth. From time to time, it has been incarnated in an individual who has exteriorised it in more or less eloquent words. It has then been stifled again by hostile forces; by cupidity, egoism, or ambition, and men continued and still continue to kill each other, but each one of these incarnations has given us more warmth and more light. On some far-off day,

no doubt, the ideal will triumph, and its triumph will mean fraternity, the divine fraternity that we do not yet know.

This was the dream of Christ, but how much greater still! There is a spirituality mingled with that, a spirituality drawn from profound sources which was to open the human soul a little more. This dream is contained, in its entirety, in the four Gospels. When, after the waves of ardent, tumultuous, closely condensed thoughts of the Old Testament, we come to those of the New Testament, we have the impression of sailing along on a peaceful stream and it seems good to us, it seems infinitely better.

For the first time, I have read the Christian poem through. Its Oriental charm and its mysticism have penetrated me through and through. For the first time I have seen Christ.

Christ! We have no physical picture of him, but we have given him beautiful, regular features; blue eyes, rather long, fair hair, parted over his forehead and thrown back behind his ears. His beard, too, is fair and he is tall. He has a grave, austere expression, softened by the kindness of his lips. We have clothed him in a seamless robe and, thanks to suggestion, it is like this that he is engraved in millions of human brains. He was the God who lived among us. He had to come, in order to put into activity fresh psychical forces, in order to bring us nearer to the Beyond. He put into the soul of the Earth fresh forces, consolations and moral life-buoys. He inspired the folly of the cross, exalted love, heroic sacrifices. In his name, men have

loved and hated, saved and killed, pardoned and persecuted, healed and tortured. The nineteen-hundred-years-old Christ is always young. His divine magnetism acts still. He is one of those who can never perish. I knew all that and yet I had never been able to share the love and adoration which he has always aroused. There was even within me a latent hostility against him, which I would not have owned even to my own shadow, and of which I was somewhat ashamed. The reason of this was not entirely my own fault. The figure of Christ is not presented to us fairly. It is cut into pieces for us, and not one of these pieces gives us his real personality. His doctrine is presented to us in verses and in texts. It is rendered obscure, thanks to ignorance, a lack of comprehension and the commentaries of the Epistles. We neither feel his humanity nor his divinity. He seems to hover between heaven and earth. In spite of this, and perhaps because of it, he touched souls that were religiously sensibilised and he conquered the crowd by the dramatic side of his story, but he left people like me, cold and indifferent.

In the course of the reading of the Gospels, which I have just completed, he appeared to me freed from all theological embellishments, freed from dogma and fables. I felt him invested with an irresistible authority. I discovered in him a breadth of thought that I had never suspected, a generous philosophy, an infinite goodness and indulgence. He has conquered me intellectually, and fascinated me by his mysticism as a visionary. I now have for him a profound admiration and that tender pity which the victims of sacrifices inspire.

He was certainly one of the Great Initiators, the greatest of them all, undoubtedly. He was, above all, what he delighted in calling himself: "The Son of Man." It seems to me that I understand how this dream came about which was to renew the Western soul.

Circumcision and monotheism had put a barrier between the Jews and the other nations which isolated them completely. The Jews were the most exclusive of all nations. They believed themselves to be the favourites of God. Their mind was concentrated on the Scriptures which promised them a Liberator and an empire more powerful than that of the Assyrians. The Scriptures were their literature, their poetry, their spiritual food. They loved metaphysical discussions, just as the Greeks loved philosophical discussions. Liberty of opinion, which was allowed to them all, had resulted in the foundation of a quantity of sects. The Temple and the synagogues were not only places for prayer, but schools and fields of ardent polemic. Thanks to the Essenians and the Pharisees, whom Greek thought had reached, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul had penetrated among them, and this alimented their controversies. It was in the synagogue, no doubt, and in the Scriptures that the child Jesus had learnt to read. His mind was, probably, saturated with the Scriptures. St. Luke tells us that, when he was twelve years old, his parents took him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover and that he remained in the Temple. They found him there three days later, arguing with the doctors. In reply to the reproaches of his parents, he said: "Wist ye not that I must be

about my Father's business?" It would seem as though he were already conscious of his mission. The occult work of Providence had commenced in his brain; and this work was to continue for the next twenty-one years. Job's complaints, which are those of all humanity, had found an echo within him. The scapegoat, laden with the sins of Israel and sent to die in the desert, suggested to him, perhaps, the heroic desire to take upon himself the sins of the world and to offer himself as a sacrifice, in order to turn away punishment and suffering from it. Either through revelation or auto-suggestion, he identified himself with that Messiah who was to "heal broken hearts." Was he not the last scion of that royal house of David, from which it was written that the Messiah was to come? Whilst working with his hands, whilst walking alone in the country round about Galilee, a new doctrine: the Sermon on the Mount, the *unique prayer* to the Father in heaven, was being elaborated behind his forehead. And then, getting more and more exalted, he began to dream of a spiritual perfection such as had never yet been attained. I fancy he must have read, over and over again, the prophecies about the Messiah, and, intoxicated with the idea of his own sacrifice, he must have repeated, with all the voluptuousness of the mystic: "The Son of Man must needs suffer much."

When the necessary elaboration was complete, he entered into the active part of his mission. He was baptised in the Jordan by John the Baptist, a new prophet who had declared himself to be the forerunner of "him who was to come." One day, in the syna-

gogue of Nazareth, having stood up to read, the book of the prophet Isaiah was passed to him. He opened it and found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," etc. After closing the book and returning it to the minister, he sat down and declared that he was the one who had been sent. This scene is, I think, one of the most real and impressive of any in the New Testament. It taught me that Jesus knew how to read!

During the three years that followed, in the Temple, under Solomon's Porch, in the synagogues, on the banks of the Jordan and of the Sea of Galilee and on the surrounding hills, he preached what we call "Christianism." He exposed in warm, sweet, loving words, the dream of his childhood and youth, that dream which was to affect millions of creatures. He represented God, no longer as an implacable Judge, no longer as the God of a chosen people, but as the God of all humanity, as a good and merciful Father, with whom he was in constant communion. In the name of God he promised immortality, a kingdom in heaven, where the hungry of this world should be satisfied, where the afflicted should be consoled and the humble exalted. And what was still more unheard of, he proclaimed as blessed those who suffered and those to whom little had been given, as they were to have a double share of glory. He endeavoured to make this fatherly God known, whom he wanted to give to the Terrestrians. By means of ingenious and very Oriental similes, he brought this kingdom nearer and made it, as it were,

tangible. He spoke of fraternity as no one had hitherto spoken. He repeated constantly the words: "Love one another." He knew well that earthly happiness lay in that. He demanded of mankind an effort that had not hitherto been given, and that has not even yet been given, that of returning good for evil; instead of dealing blow for blow he wanted men to *love their enemies*. He preached renunciation of the good things of the world; he declared that, in order to serve God, a man must be ready to leave father, mother, family and country. And, plunging into the very depths of the human soul, he affirmed that the mere desire to commit adultery, theft or murder, constituted the crime. He created, in this way, the *sin of thought*. This does not seem much, but it is immense.

And Jesus was seen practising these extraordinary things. He believed that he had the power of remitting sin and he used this power freely, with a joy that we can well imagine. He spoke more of reward than of punishment. *He only threatened with eternal fire those who refused to feed and clothe the poor.* He went himself to the outcasts, to those who did not dare come to him, his gentlest words were for the sinners and more especially for sinful women. He pitied the crowd which followed him, he felt for every one's hunger and fatigue and he made all the people sit down and then fed them. He certainly was "the Son of Man." Yes, he had pity on them, but his pity was not extended to animals. He had the Oriental's indifference with regard to animals, and I have always been sorry for this and also surprised. It is true that his laws of kind-

ness to men have been so little understood and so little respected, that laws of kindness to inferior creatures would not have been respected at all. The hour of justice had not yet come for animals, this is the only possible explanation.

I have heard mothers say timidly that Jesus was hard towards his own family. He lived on another plane, and mystics scarcely feel the ties of flesh and blood. He loved his disciples more than his family. They were, as he called them, "his dear children," those who were to continue his teaching.

Unlike the Jews, who made no proselytes, fearing, no doubt, to be too numerous when it came to sharing the empire that had been promised them, Jesus said to his apostles: "Teach all nations." He did not exclude the heathen, or the Gentiles, from the kingdom of heaven. He wanted his church to be universal, like the prayer he gave us. What profound philosophy there is in all this!

It is difficult for us, with our ears so accustomed to this doctrine that we no longer listen to it, to conceive the effect it produced in the synagogues. It must have rent the veil of the Temple. For those who offered sacrifices, for the doctors of the Old Law, it constituted blasphemy and heresy. It seems to me that I see Jesus arguing with them, punctuating his arguments with his forefinger and middle finger, with the grave, impressive gesture of the Oriental. I can see his hearers drawing the skirts of their garments around them in anger, as they questioned and endeavoured to confound him. I can see a whole crowd of dark, threatening eyes

and then the blue eyes of the Messiah. I can see beards quivering with indignation.

Jesus knew quite well the danger to which he was exposing himself, but he continued his preaching all the same. He had governed the wind on the Sea of Gennesareth, but he could not govern the hatred which was rumbling all around him, as he was to die from that hatred. As the hour of the supreme sacrifice approached, one feels his sadness increasing. He speaks frequently of his end which is near, and he gives more and more instructions to his apostles. He retires more frequently to the depths of the woods to pray and to commune with his heavenly Father. We can imagine how he must have regretted leaving his little flock and not seeing his Church established. At any rate, he knew what the prophets had not known — that we must die, *in order to be born again.* He was dying for the sake of his ideal, which was the welfare of humanity. If he could have seen what was to be the outcome of his dream, he would have been crucified twice over. Let us hope that this was hidden from him. In the last act of the drama, all that is human in him protests, all that is divine is resigned. He feels the bitterness of treachery, the grief of seeing himself disowned, the horrors of death. He was thoroughly "the Son of Man," and God be praised for that.

In the eyes of the doctors of the Old Law, Jesus was a modernist; that is, he represented the future. The future always has the forces of the past against it. Those who bear it along may die, but it triumphs always — until, in its turn, it has become the past, the

vanquished immortal. One cannot help a humoristic smile on thinking that if, four centuries later, Christ had reappeared in Rome and had preached his doctrine there, he would have been treated still more cruelly by his own Church than he was by the Synagogue of Jerusalem. Such is the movement of Life!

I must own that I read this poem of the Gospel as literature, as a romance writer would read it. I revelled in it, as I still can revel in anything that is very beautiful. I enjoyed it more, and I understood it better, perhaps, than those who read it as a matter of duty, or from religious habit. The apparitions of Christ after death give the impression of spiritualistic phenomena. In the whole of the last part, there is a sort of luminous atmosphere.

When one knows the Orient, the Gospel seems to have been lived only yesterday. The contradictions that one finds in it are somewhat disenchanting, but they prove that the apostles had not concerted together to write their respective accounts. St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, for instance, say that the women who followed Jesus of Galilee, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children "stood afar off." They do not mention the presence of the Virgin at all. St. John, alone, brings her to the foot of the cross and makes Jesus say, pointing to the disciple whom he loved: "Woman, behold thy son." This, I feel sure, was added by the theologians — and it rings false. In the Orient, women would not have been present at the

crucifixion, they would have looked on "afar off." I can picture to myself their group.

I have my doubts, too, as to whether Jesus ever said, in one of his parables, that the grain of mustard seed waxed a great tree so that the birds of the air could make their nest in it. The birds of the air making their nest in the branches of a vegetable! Oh, St. Matthew! Oh, St. Luke!

In the gentleness of the New Testament, one does not feel any dogma. There is only an affectionate exhortation to well doing, which is the secret of happiness. From time to time, though, a hard, discordant note bursts forth, like those famous words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," etc. This is again a theologian's invention. We cannot imagine Christ saying it. These words were *charged*, in truth, for they have caused the death of millions of creatures. They were one of the greatest motive powers of the Christian evolution, one of the most painful that has been lived. We might very well repeat here with Pilate: "What I have written, I have written," and, in my opinion, this had to be written.

When I came to the end of the last of the Gospels, of the Gospel which begins like one of Plato's monologues and which ends with the Hebrew word, "Amen," with a long flight of my thought I went over all that had been the outcome of this little volume, which I was

holding half open under my left thumb, and I realised what a formidable accumulator of spiritual forces it was. I felt that kind of awe, as I gazed at it, which the great mysteries of Nature make us feel.

The brilliant, white form which came from the tomb of Jesus was his doctrine, the true Christianism. It was then, alas, only an apparition. To the "Quo vadis, Domine?" which St. Peter asked the Master at Rome, on the Appian Way, he might have replied: "I go to Rome to be crucified by my apostles and their successors." Legend knows it — but History tells it — and proves it.

The prophet of Jordan was to be born again on the banks of the Tiber. It was there, in the capital of the civilised world, that Paganism, Judaism and Christianism were to be brought into harmony. It was there that the one God was to meet the gods of Egypt, of India, of Persia, of Greece and even of Rome, in order to absorb them and to transform them. It was in Rome only that, out of the dream of Jesus, the Catholic Church could have been established.

I am told that actors, artists and a cinematographic apparatus have been sent to Palestine with the idea of reconstituting and reproducing the immortal drama. We shall then be able to live over again the waves of emotion lived nearly two thousand years ago. It appears that this is necessary for us. These modern miracles fill me with admiration and cause me childish regret.

CHAPTER XI

THE Roman Catholic Church? I feel my little barque, "The Why," terribly tossed about just here by waves from the depths. I am now facing the highest and most dangerous point of my cruise. Shall I succeed in doubling this point without being shipwrecked in injustice? That would certainly be the most humiliating of all shipwrecks.

The Catholic Church! How many are there, among its two hundred and fifty million adepts, who realise what it has been and what it really is? Its friends only know of its combats and its triumphs, its enemies know only its errors and crimes. We can merely put an expurgated history of it into the hands of the young. This leaves children with a recollection of something so tiresome that they never feel inclined to read it later *in extenso*, and that fact is a safeguard.

One day, when visiting a friend who lived in a provincial town, the conversation turned on politics. My friend's husband, who was very reactionary, reproached a member of Parliament with the misdeeds of the Republic.

"What can we do?" replied the other; "the Republic must do as the Church has done, make amends and improve."

"As far as I know," put in our hostess drily, "the Church has never needed to make amends nor to improve."

"Yes, but then you do not know, that is just the mischief," said M. X——, smiling. "Its policy has been more dishonest than ours and some of its Popes have been acknowledged criminals."

My poor friend's face turned purple with anger.

"That is mere slander!" she exclaimed. "I shall never believe it, never!" she added, poking her crochet-needle energetically into her ball of wool. Faith born of ignorance is the most invincible of any.

In one of the strongest of our modern comedies: *Business is Business*, by Octave Mirbeau, a well-to-do bourgeois, who is a regular miscreant, says to a poor aristocrat, who is a believer: "You do not even know what that Church of yours is!" He knew, though, thanks to his intuition, this handler of money and of men and, in his exclamation, we can hear both admiration and envy.

The Roman Catholic Church! The Great Prostitute! The Red Woman! These are the epithets that its fanatical enemies have showered upon it, but all that is mere literature. These are ridiculous insults which simply bear witness to an absolute lack of philosophy and to coarse ignorance. It really is, I fancy, just simply the *Great Misunderstood One*. Thanks to the subjective vision, I held out against it for a long time. A sentiment that I cannot understand urged me on always to search for its misdeeds rather than for its good deeds, and when I discovered them, I felt the most perverse pleasure. Its policy, its ethics, its tyranny, made all that was best within me rebel, and this best within me made me unjust. At present, when

I can consider it in an objective and not an isolated way, its work appears to me colossal and, at the same time, so inevitable, that men all disappear from it and I only see God there as the supreme motive power. The struggles, the victories, the defeats of the Church have been those of humanity. It has been the plaything of Life. It has had to suffer all the ironies of Life, its reverses have been particularly hard and, at present, I feel the tenderest pity for it. It is the *continuation of Roman History!* How many French men and women are there who know this? It was taken along to the throne of the Cæsars, because, from there alone, it could "renew the face" of the Western world. The establishment of Christianism in pagan Rome has been considered as a miracle. Miracles are always prepared a long time ahead by Providence. When an unexpected, extraordinary event takes place, or some cure that was considered hopeless, we may be sure that invisible forces have been working for all this, unknown to us. Paganism, which was about to die, was waiting for Christianism, as it needed this for its evolution. The Judaic Church, which was established in Jerusalem directly after the death of Christ, also needed Paganism, in order to be transformed and to accomplish the fabulous task which had been assigned to it. As a Spanish proverb says: "God writes straight on crooked lines."

Rome was the holy city of the Western world. The boundary of the ancient city had been traced according to Latin or Etruscan rites. It had taken the gods of Greece and its theologians had made a multitude of other gods, too, for it. It had divined all the forces

of Life, those which take man along from his cradle to his tomb, those which give birth to sorrow, joy and love, those which produce the fruits and flowers of the soil — and even clothing. And these were not mere metaphysical abstractions and symbols, but living powers which had a personality and names, powers which it adored and to which it prayed unceasingly. The number of these was so great that only the priests could catalogue them. With its legislative mind, Rome had, as it were, made Olympus form a regiment and created a religious law with dogmas and worship. This law was an integral part of the State, it could not be changed without a special decree from the Senate. It regulated the intercourse of man with the divinities; it regulated all rites and forms of prayer with a minuteness that seems ridiculous. Titus Livius, alluding to this, says: "These are small things, but it was by not disdaining these small things, that our fathers made Rome so great." And, as a matter of fact, these small things maintained *unity* there, that immense force which the Catholic Church was to obtain, later on, so dearly. Religion had its pontiffs, priests, sacred jurisconsults, but they could never become independent, as they were deprived of initiative and of executive power. This seems to have been arranged in order to lessen the resistance opposed to the establishment of Christianism.

No nation has had so much religion and so little religious sentiment as the Romans. All the various acts of their life, birth, the wearing of the toga, marriage, anniversaries, were religious acts and solemnised as

such. They had endless processions, fêtes for all circumstances, for the seed-time and harvest and for the dead. They offered up prayers for the welfare of a beloved child, for the victorious return of a friend, for the healing of their sick. The walls of their temples were covered with their *ex-votos*, as those of Christian Churches were to be, later on. The poor Terrestrian has always had the same faith, because he has always had the same sorrows.

The Romans consulted the gods about everything. They believed, as the whole of the Ancient World did, that they could correspond with their gods by means of magic, an infinite number of signs, the arrangement of the intestines of victims, sacrifices which the priests interpreted in return for retributions. Official religion had given to the Romans an official soul, and to this soul form was everything. In the end they believed that the divinities, like themselves, were most particular with regard to the exactitude of a rite or of a gesture. They treated their gods on an equal footing. They endeavoured to buy their favours and, when they gave a good price, they expected a great deal in return. According to them: "Piety gave the right to fortune."

This State religion underwent all the political vicissitudes. It was weakened by the Republic, but Augustus re-established it. If we are to believe the inscriptions, every emperor re-established something. The century of Augustus was called "the devout century." All literature was religious. Horace, Tibullus and Ovid sang of the gods. There was a splendid flame of Pagan

faith. It was the last flash from the lamp that was to die away. From the very first days of the world, humanity had knocked at the doors of the Beyond, but under Augustus there was a rush for these doors. Gods and demons spoke to men in their dreams, or, at least, they believed this, and what we believe becomes real. People believed in hell, in the resurrection of the dead, and the imagination conceived all kinds of wonders. The supernatural appeared natural. This phenomenon has happened at the eve of all evolutions and the evolution was then quite near. The human soul lacked spirituality. It was a splendid temple, but it was bare and empty and Providence was about to fill it. For this, the myrrh of the Orient was to be mixed with the wine of the Occident, and this mixture took place in a wonderful way.

In order to comprehend the work of the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed all divine and human work, and to consider it with any justice, we must never lose sight of that absolute truth that struggle is the *generating element* of Life, and that without struggle Life could neither exist nor be renewed. *The cross with unequal arms, with lines that go in opposite ways,* is the revealing symbol of this.

Like all great things, the Roman Catholic Church began in a very humble way, and those who were there at this beginning would have been incapable of imagining the parabola that it was called upon to describe.

The dream of Jesus had created, in Jerusalem, a sort of Judaic Church, the fifteen first Bishops of which were circumcised and baptised. This proves how hesi-

tating their belief was. In obedience to the Master who had said: "Go and teach all nations," a few of the apostles had set out to take the Gospel of charity to the great cities of the Orient. St. Peter and St. John went to Rome. They arrived there, as Jesus had ordered: "with neither gold nor silver." The humble pilgrims received the hospitality of St. Pudens who had two daughters, Praxède and Pudentienne. These were, I believe, their first converts. With their souls still aglow from their communion with Christ, they told the humble people whom they gathered round them, the story of the drama of Eden, of the Incarnation of the God-Saviour, of his life and of his death. They revealed to them the existence of a heavenly kingdom, where all was joy, delight and love; of a hell, where all was suffering, pain and hatred. Of these two kingdoms they said that they held the keys, and they promised the entrance to those who would consent to the ceremony of baptism, which was to wash away all sins. They had enough to offer for making proselytes and they made them, beginning with those whom Christ himself would have called: the disinherited, the slaves, the black sheep. A sect was thus formed, the members of which led each other on to adopt the difficult practices of the Gospel. They had all things in common, their poverty and their worldly goods, they sat at the same table and, as a foretaste of Paradise, the hungry were fed, the naked clothed and the afflicted consoled. The great Roman lady called the poor woman "Sister"; the patrician treated the humble workman as a brother, and the kind of voluptuous pleasure which these fresh

sentiments gave them can easily be imagined. These early Christians surrounded themselves with mystery and erected their altars in subterranean passages outside the gates of Rome. They broke bread and drank wine according to a very old rite, a Persian rite, I believe, which Jesus had reinstituted. To this rite, they added the belief in transubstantiation, a belief which was to produce wonderful psychical effects. The sect, thanks to its very perfection, would have died out, if persecutions had not brought it to the front and made it play its part, which it certainly did admirably. After this, theologians took it in hand and gave it the movement common to all religions: *the spiral movement*, by means of which religions gradually get farther and farther away from their starting-point. I do not like theologians. They are religious politicians, "those who make God's plans less clear to us, thanks to their discourses without understanding." They defended the sect with lies more often than with truths. They have increased, rather than lessened, the sorrows of the world. They have been agents of our struggle: they have served and they are still serving. We must resign ourselves in face of this undeniable fact, and endeavour not to bear them too much ill-will. They were necessary, in order to put that fresh force, spirituality, into action. Like all forces, newly set free, it went to extremes. The body which had, very rightly, been loved and cared for, the body which is the cradle of the soul, was now only looked upon as an instrument of perdition. It was starved, it was not allowed the most legitimate satisfactions — not even cleanliness! The disciples of Jesus

did not wash their hands before sitting down to table, and the Scribes and Pharisees reproached them for this omission. This little characteristic feature, which is recorded in the Gospel, had its influence on the entire discipline of the primitive Church. This world of ours was no longer anything to the early Christians. They lived in the Beyond, in a Beyond that they had created. The effort was so great that it produced a kind of spiritual hysteria. They knew all the voluptuousness of sorrow and they even went in search of it. In the amphitheatre, they died as though death were a heavenly joy. They had visions, fits of ecstasy, they prophesied, they believed that they saw demons and they drove these demons away. Their imagination, thanks to sermons, was heated to the degree of white heat and was exalted by pagan supernaturalism. It began to make legends and saints, just as the Romans had made divinities, and, wonderfully enough, out of the depths of the Christian dream, as out of the Buddhist and Pagan dreams, came the Virgin Mary. In the Gospel, if I am not mistaken, she only appears three times. We have only her dialogue with the angel, her song, the *Magnificat*, which is, undoubtedly, the work of some theologian-poet, and then the words uttered by her at the marriage of Cana, by means of which she persuaded Jesus to advance the hour of his mission by performing a miracle. With this material, Christian humanity made a metaphysical personage of extreme grandeur. In its childish logic, it attributed to her an immense power over the God for whose Incarnation she had served, and it built its hopes on her.

It erected temples for her, it put her on its altars and proclaimed her immaculate and sorrowful. In the cellules of thousands of artists, this ideal picture took form and produced immortal master-pieces. The Virgin Mother! There is certainly a symbol here, and it is in Nature. What does this symbol hide? This truth, perhaps, that *man proceeds from God and not from man.* I cannot see anything else in it, but it is true that I do not see very deep down. Let philosophers search, for this problem is well worth while.

The Church of the first centuries had its romantic followers. They began to live, not according to the precepts of the Gospel, but according to their own dream, a morbid dream which depressed them. Thus, like Buddhism, Christianism had its stoics; its fakirs who discovered how to make themselves refractory to suffering; its cynics who disdained, not only cleanliness, but decency, who went as far as to browse the grass of the fields, in order to perform an act of humility. There were actually browsing monks. This Asiatic folly spread and made monks of men. When it reached the feminine brain, it produced monkesses. It peopled the most awful solitudes with anchorites and cenobites. It flung into the sands of Libya, and among the rocks of Thebaid, colonies who built veritable hives there, hives which were the rough beginnings of future monasteries. It was there that living in community was inaugurated, and it was there, under the pure and ardent sky of Egypt, that men prayed day and night. The rustic trumpet or cornet, summoning to spiritual exercises, must, more than once, have silenced the wild

beasts and greatly impressed the spirit of the desert. These repulsive, wild monks, when taken to Rome by their primate, had the most unexpected success. By their violent and picturesque preaching, they exercised a sort of magnetism on the crowd and this resulted in numerous conversions. Patricians and magistrates transformed their palaces into monasteries. The dream became more and more extravagant and went as far as claiming divinity. St. Paula, who was converted by St. Jerome, was called "the mother-in-law of God," because she had given to Him one of her daughters as a mystic spouse!

This development of the inner life, this florescence of fresh mysticism, constituted one of those phenomena, ordained, perhaps, in order to reveal to us the depth of our being. The human soul made a desperate effort to free itself from its body. It did not succeed, but it was a very wild and very fine effort. We cannot regret that the effort was made. When a famous chef lights his fires for the first time anywhere, he first prepares what is called his *stock*, which means his gravies, jellies, condensed things of all kinds with which he can, afterwards, make very good things. Well then, without any irreverence, it seems to me that Providence acted in the same way. In order to sustain the Church, Providence prepared a foundation of spiritual forces which, during nineteen hundred years, have enabled it to brave the terrible eddies behind its rudder, and so arrive safe and sound to cast anchor at its haven.

The Christian sect replaced bloody sacrifices by sacrifices of money. This was, perhaps, quite as bar-

barous, but less repugnant in appearance. Its priests soon learnt how to make use of St. Peter's keys. In order to obtain the remission of their sins, many of their new converts despoiled themselves of their wealth. The Church soon possessed farms, houses and even shops, later on it was to have a treasury and States of its own. "The Word was made flesh," and it soon had all the longings and ambitions of the flesh. There is nothing astonishing in that.

All the great religions, and even the small ones, have handled sin-money. They have lived on it and they still live on it. They are also charged with the task of *transmuting it into good.* If evil were not to serve for good, it would not exist. The most beautiful monuments erected to the gods and to God are expiatory monuments. The Catholic Church has transmuted its sin-money in a more magnificent way than any other Church has done. It has transmuted it into works of art, which are the joy and the education of our eyes; into works of relief which have helped humanity to live and to die. St. Paul, the philosopher-apostle, appears to have grasped the idea of this admirable and humoristic economy of Nature when he says: "The law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This takes away from sin its character of offence to God and gives the impression of balance being re-established — and this is, undoubtedly, the truth of things.

The Roman Catholic Church has been a democratic dream, a theocratic dream and a monarchical dream. Its dreams have all been realised, but only for a short

time. The ending of each dream has left the Church humiliated and weakened. Its fine, democratic fraternity was conquered by human egoism; its ambition was the spiritual domination over all souls, and so it lost forever the Greek Church, England and Germany, — the nations that it had made. The temporal kingdom it had built up was taken away from it, even the territory that kings, such as Pepin, had given, "for the remission of their sins and the salvation of their soul." It was saved three times by its enemies, by Paganism, by the Renaissance and by the Reformation. Was I not right in saying that it has played Life's game, but not its own?

Religions do not come from the human brain ready made. They are formed slowly under divine inspiration. Christian theologians drew from the doctrine of Christ certain fixed dogmas. Those of the Trinity and of the Incarnation were particularly difficult to elaborate. Finally they established the dogma that the Son proceeded from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. After stormy discussions, they decided that Mary could be a virgin and a mother, "just as light may pass through crystal without breaking it." The fact that Terrestrians, creatures who, from the height of a few yards, look as though they are part of the ground of their planet, should dare to make God come down to them, in order to conciliate His immensity with their smallness, seemed grotesque to me formerly and roused my indignation, just as a blasphemy would have done. At present, I see in this a proof of our possibilities; I see

in it a great hope. And, always with a view to the eternal struggle, as soon as a dogma was proclaimed, an adverse dogma appeared, creating a rival community, the members of which were heretics and, as such, were condemned, persecuted and tortured by the mother-community. Taking the times into consideration, this cruelty was necessary by way of maintaining unity. A lack of unity would have produced still more evil. That is what we must say to ourselves. Before becoming a heretic himself, Nestorius wrote to the Emperor Theodosius: "Cæsar, give me the earth purged of heretics and I will give you the kingdom of heaven." This man, with his heart full of hatred, imagined that he could dispose of the kingdom of Heaven! Each one of our dogmas has produced waves and waves of suffering, just as it has produced waves and waves of consolation! All this is the play of Life!

The theologians then proceeded to manufacture canonical laws, bulls of indulgence, bulls of excommunication, a whole arsenal of spiritual weapons which were to serve in ruling the nations and in holding kings in check. The kingdom of heaven, of which Jesus had dreamed amidst the dreary scenery of Palestine, was transformed on the Pagan banks of the Tiber. It now became an Eden of gold and precious stones, where man's table was always set and supplied with delicious things. At the same time, by means of the eloquent voices of its preaching Fathers, the Church flung into the human mind fearful visions and all the terror of a fire which burned always and never consumed. It kept its hold on man, thanks to his innate need of hap-

piness and his dread, which is also innate, of suffering. Man could not escape, for humanity always has the beliefs that are necessary for it.

It is high time that we had courage enough to look boldly at the play of Life, this play of which we are the victims, the martyrs and sometimes the heroes. We must have philosophy enough not to be scandalised by it and to understand that, whatever it may be, it is directed by God. All the good and evil that the Church has accomplished has been by means of St. Peter's keys, which give access to Paradise and to hell. They have been the keystone of the Church. It is very natural, although it is a pretty irony, that these keys should figure on its escutcheon. These symbolical, imaginary and invisible things, the power of which no one has yet been able to compute, served to convert the barbarians of Northern Europe, to bring them into the plan of civilisation, to make nations of them; they served to create France, Germany, Spain and England. They procured for the Church, money, which is as much the nerve of religion as it is of war. They brought Constantine within its pale. The gift of the Basilica, of the Palace of St. John of Lateran, of St. Peter's Church and of the modest dwelling which was eventually to be the nucleus of the Vatican, was to obtain for the Emperor the remission of his sins, including the murder of his son, his father-in-law and numerous massacres. These two mother-cells were the transmutation of sin-money.

Thanks to the magic of these keys, the successor of St. Peter, at the beginning of the fourth century, drove

through the streets of Jupiter's city, dressed superbly and seated in a triumphal chariot, and the people all bowed before him as he passed. The Church of Rome had a most rigid hierarchy, a liturgy, a particular melody of its own, magnificent ceremonies, a college of priests and of bishops, legions of monks, a regular clergy and a secular clergy (two Siamese brothers who were enemies and whom it was impossible to separate without killing the two bodies). It had prophets who were its augurs, and saints who were its tutelary gods. The early Christians had forbidden images, fearing that these might lead the people back to idolatry. They were now allowed, in order to exalt people's devotion and concentrate their thoughts. Some images were produced that were not made by the *hand of man.* One of these was the imprint of Christ's face, said to have been left on St. Veronica's handkerchief, thanks to the sweat and blood of his agony. This still exists and is exhibited, in Rome, on Good Friday, for public veneration. The Greeks, obeying the will of their peasant Emperor, Leo, the Isaurian, had also put away images of all kinds. They, too, were obliged to restore them, as their Asiatic soul, more than any other, needed icons. And thus it was that Christians burnt incense before symbols, just as their Pagan ancestors had done before their idols. Nothing dies and everything is renewed. Thanks to a superb lack of logic, it was now believed that the human body, that body which had been so despised, retained something of the psychical power of the saints, the gift of miracles, for instance, and its remains were considered sacred. I fancy this

must have been the idea of some monk. One of my friends who had bought a thirteenth-century reliquary, found a bone in it — made of plaster. "I would wager anything," he said, crushing a particle of it between his finger and thumb, "that this has healed people, for it is always faith that heals."

And all this was willed by the gods. The poor Terrestrian has not only to live his own ideal, but to fix it in stone, on wood, or on canvas, in order to transmit it to future generations and so produce the accumulators which are to communicate to them sparks of the higher life. And this is, in my opinion, one of the most wonderful things of our romance. Like all the great religions, Roman Catholic Christianism was to possess a treasury of art. It inspired legions of artists and gave us master-pieces of psychical beauty. We must be grateful to it for this.

Without being aware of it, the Church of Rome was penetrated, from its earliest hours, by the Pagan and Imperial atmosphere of the City of the Cæsars, by its legislative, constructive and dominating genius. It absorbed forces which were to lead it on to victory and to defeat. After a patient, and somewhat cruel struggle, it conquered supremacy over all the other Churches, even over the Greek Church, which had incontestable superiority as regards knowledge. The conversion of Constantine was its triumph. At the end of the fourth century, the Senate of the Eastern and Western Empire was convoked by Theodosius the Great and called upon to vote for Jupiter or for Christ. After all that I have just written, this seems to me most fantastical.

The prophet of Nazareth won the day over the master of Olympus. This was, perhaps, because he was the Emperor's candidate and snobbism has always existed. Christianism was thereupon declared to be the State religion. The wealth of the College of Pagan Pontiffs passed over to the new religion and, many centuries later, the wealth of this very religion was to be confiscated for the benefit of the State, which had no longer any religion at all. These constant reversions always excite my admiration as a novelist.

St. Peter's barque, when it had once become a *Dreadnought*, finally left the tranquil waters of the Sea of Galilee, and was launched upon the vast waters of the world and of politics. The Romans, left by the Greek Emperors to struggle with barbarians and factions, deserted the Capital for the little Christian Basilica, where they found religious spectacles and material and spiritual help. They grouped themselves around the Bishop, who had taken the name of Pope. They elected him themselves and he won for himself a kind of political authority. The clergy presented two or three candidates to them for election, and they then chose their *Father*, or at least they believed that they chose him. It was a piece of supreme cleverness to give to the people the right of voting, or rather the illusion of having that right. The people, eternal children as they are, never had, and have not even now, anything but this illusion. Later on, the Holy Spirit was to transmit its will through the College of Cardinals.

Just as Rome had had good and bad Emperors, so it was to have good and bad Popes, because under the

tiara, just as under the Imperial circlet, there were virtues and vices. It had Gregory I, who, for a whole week, abstained from administering the sacraments, because a beggar had died in the street of hunger. It had John XII, the son of a courtesan, who was nothing but a drunken, brutal soldier, and all these Popes had their part in the play of Life.

Christianism, which had entered Rome like a lamb, became a roaring lion there, and its roarings "renewed the face" of the Western World and made the Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages were a monk's dream, the lewd pictures of which are still to be seen on the doorways of our old cathedrals. This dream was peopled with demons, with grimacing faces, like those of the gargoyles. It was the dream of a prisoner who had never felt the warmth of a ray of sunshine, never breathed the perfume of a flower, never listened to the song of a bird, never seen God in His works. The Middle Ages had a horror of Nature, just as night has a horror of the day. The Middle Ages even looked upon Nature as a heretic. In the name of Christ, the Middle Ages tortured millions of human creatures, cut off precious limbs, tore out the tongue with which thought is uttered, blinded the seeing pupils of the eyes.

The Middle Ages brought about the great sanguinary schism which was to divide Christianism into the Church of the East and the Church of the West. The Greek Church, having taken upon itself to declare that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the *Father alone*, the Latin Church, in order to affirm its superiority, decreed, at

the Council of Nice, the addition of the word — *Filioque, and of the Son.* Filioque! Here we have another word, just a little word, that was loaded,— and with cannon-balls! It brought about ecclesiastical war, the cruelest war of any. It engendered odious crimes, provoked an interchange of anathemas between Rome and Constantinople, which armed Christians against each other, inundated the porches and altars of the churches with human blood and sowed the germs of a hatred which still exists. When one first begins to think of all this, one is at a loss to comprehend it. All the questions imaginable crowd to our lips and then, if we only reflect a little, the divine work answers us triumphantly. From this little word, *Filioque* (which ought to be written in red letters in our creed), and from the struggle which it brought about, came the Byzantine mentality and soul, and Byzantine art. It gave to Life more than it ever cost Life.

The Middle Ages, in spite of their chivalry, their courts of love, their poetry, their viols and lutes, despised and detested woman and disfigured her beauty. They even doubted whether she had been created in the image of God. "Mulier non est facta ad imaginem Dei." In the fantastical history that is taught to the young, in the Perseverance Catechism classes, it is said that Paganism lowered woman. I cannot forgive Christianism for slandering its predecessor so frequently. It is great enough itself to have no need of stooping to such petty baseness. Paganism, on the contrary, raised woman more than any other religion has done. It placed her on its Olympus, it gave her an

active part in the government of this world, it built altars to her, and Antiquity had its great women just as it had its great men. The list of them is certainly not as long, but the very fact *that there could be some on the list*, proves that woman was not held in low esteem. Out of religious sentiment and out of fear of Minerva, who must have been a feminist, no one would have dared to speak disparagingly of woman. The wives and mothers of the Iliad are adorable. Homer speaks of them with tender reverence. Rome had her vestals and her matrons and they counted for something, both in religious worship and in society. The Christianism of the Middle Ages was cruel towards woman. It spoke of her as "the sex," it considered her as the necessary sin, it made of her religion's instrument, the husband's thing. We have only to read what the Fathers of the Church say of her in order to judge of her condition. She is the eternal subject of the coarsest jests, she provokes the uncouth laugh of the prelate, the monk and the man of the people. "Good or bad," it is said, "she must be ruled with the stick." It is said, too, that she has more fleas than man and that she is accustomed to killing lice with her nails. Pope Pius II, in the midst of the Renaissance, calls her "a ravager of youth." Antiquity never spoke in so ugly a way of woman.

The very Christian Middle Ages invented sins and peopled the air with demons. They lived on hell and through hell. Their art, about which certain people go into ecstasies, was cold and unnatural. The two principal things "simplicity and light" were unknown

to the Middle Ages. They drove away the sun. In the dwellings of man, openings gave place to loop-holes. War became more perfidious and hatred more lasting and more treacherous. Bells and churches called people to arms as well as to prayer. Organisations for help and relief were to serve religion; humanitarianism was unknown. By means of feudalism and dogma, the free man was fastened down materially and morally to the soil. A more painful and more refined slavery was created than the slavery of old, and with all this darkness, the Middle Ages made light. That is the marvellous thing! They taught us to read and write: they created schools and universities. They produced a Charlemagne, a Francis of Assisi, a Giotto, a Dante, a Boccaccio. They made the epopee of the Crusades, which were to bring back to the Western world secrets of art, industry and beauty and to open the roads to commerce and to explorers. They gave us chivalry and poetry. They bore along with them the Renaissance and, because of this, we must forgive them all the rest. I wish that all my readers could see the subtlety and grandeur of the Providential work and admire it with me.

After fourteen centuries of Christianism, humanity was more barbarous than in its early days. The Pope, on reaching the throne of the Cæsars, became "The Prince" of Machiavelli's dream, the one "who made religion serve politics." In the very Christian peninsula, abominations were committed everywhere. Sforza "buries his victims alive, has them cured, dressed, their faces painted and has a gallery of them." A certain

Count Anguillara "violates his own children" and then founds a hospital in Rome for the poor. Baccio de Montone "beats the heads of nineteen monks on the anvil, because they were not of his opinion."

This was the dead failure of Christianism. It was to be saved by its old enemy — Paganism. Our lives and the history of this world are woven of these profound ironies and, although we are the victims of them, we must be able to admire them. I can still remember the curious relief I felt, as a girl, when our professor of history told us that he had finished with the Middle Ages. "Ah, I feel better!" I remarked, with a great sigh of relief. As no one had asked for information about my health, all eyes were turned towards me, and laughs, that could not be stifled, greeted my unexpected outburst, whilst I, in great confusion, lowered my head over my note-book. At present, I have just the same pleasure in seeing the god of light appear again on the horizon, in seeing Apollo chase away the darkness of the Middle Ages.

It would have seemed only natural for Olympus, Jupiter, and Greek thought to have been swept away by the whirlwind of the centuries. Statues and divinities were lying buried under layers of ruins. Old manuscripts had been washed by the monks, so that the pages should be clean. They were then left in the hands of the ignorant, which was much worse than leaving them to rats. And in spite of all this, Antiquity was not dead; fragments of its soul had been incarnated in a multitude of brains and were transmitted to successive generations, so that at the hour willed by the Providence

of God, it entered once more into activity and produced the phenomenon of humanism. In Tuscany, a group of individuals existed who had been specially impressed. In the course of their conversation, probably, they brought back into the current of Life great Thinkers who had been forgotten. Words are *living* agents. Some of them have wings, others crawl like worms. What were the words whose mission it was to resurrect Homer, Plato, Pythagoras and to *bring them into vogue?* This I do not know, but certain it is that people began to read these authors, to explain them and to get passionately devoted to them. They now roused an enthusiasm which they had never before inspired, and a new meaning was discovered in their works. And, in Florence, a centre of light was created, the radiations from which were to transform Rome — and even the Church. This, too, is one of the miracles of the "Wonderful Romance"!

The man of the fifteenth century, a condensed product of the Middle Ages, no longer adored the gods of Olympus, but he revelled in the force, the grandeur and the beauty of which they are the conception and, just as though some occult tie still existed between the past and the present, they became dear and familiar to him once more. Thanks to his contact with them, he began to take Life in a broader way and he gave it in a broader way, too, in all his creations. His reading caused a multitude of ideas to germinate in his brain; he felt the need of communicating these ideas and so academies were formed everywhere. People met together to talk and to argue, as in former days, and

they talked eagerly, just as dumb people might if speech were given to them once more. It is always those whom we call the dead who educate the living. It was they who now taught the Romans their history, who helped them to make the acquaintance of the men of former days. They vibrated, as their fathers had done before them, at Cicero's words, at the incomparable rhythm of his periods. They enjoyed the humoristic wit of Horace, they listened eagerly to the adventures of Æneas, their ancestor, as related by Virgil. This Renaissance transformed ignorant rustics into learned men, art collectors, and art patrons. It taught them how to spend amassed wealth in a noble way. In Italy, magnificent palaces took the place of the old fortified dwellings, and, for the adornment of these palaces, thousands of hands wove rich hangings, manufactured furniture inlaid with ivory, and chased gold and silver. Masters of genius produced the marvels of sculpture and painting which are the joy of certain eyes.

The Renaissance did not forget woman. It took her into its current and brought her on to the same plane as man. It snatched her away from the kitchen, from the shut up room, where she was spinning or embroidering with her servants. It took off the hideous head-gear which hid her hair, the *guimpes* which flattened her bosom, "it clothed her in soft, fine linen, in silk and velvet, which cost two thousand francs the arm." Ippolita Sforza wore a dress which was valued at a quarter of a million. It gave her "boxes full of pearls and of wonderful jewels." Instead of the distaff, it put into her hand "a viol of sandal-wood," it made

"golden needles for her embroidery." It taught her all the games of the epoch, it taught her to sing and to ride gracefully. During her long bondage, her long silence, her chrysalis-like dream, woman had been making for herself wings, and when, in the warm, Pagan light, she unfolded them, they were wonderful indeed. Without any apparent effort, she became the soul of the new society. Brought into contact with the masculine mind, she, too, became enthusiastic with regard to Greek and Latin, so that the fifteenth century had, what the twentieth century has not, women humanists, philosophers and poets — stateswomen and great women. The portraits of the Renaissance women tell a pathetic story to those who can read them. Their eyes have all the sadness of a sorrowful past, they are mistrustful, the soul looks out of them sideways, they have as yet no smile. Leonardo da Vinci must have made hundreds of sketches before he found the one that he put on the lips of the Joconda, and this smile seems to say: "I now know my own strength and your weakness." That is, in my opinion, its meaning.

The Renaissance was to do for Rome what it had done for woman. It was to take from it the headgear with which the Middle Ages had disfigured it, and to transform it anew. St. Peter had brought along with him, from Palestine, the words which were to drive out Paganism; fourteen centuries later, a few Florentines, in search of something to do, brought humanism there, and this was to bring back Paganism. It was all the more easy for it to reach the Church, as it had always been cropping out there. Paganism was in its Basilicas,

the architecture of which recalls both the temple and the Prætorium; it was to be found in its religious ceremonies, in its superstitions. It came to life again, in order to snatch the Church from the barbarity which it could no longer dominate and by which it was being dominated itself. And then, Paganism led the Church along, in a perfidious way, to the very edge of another abyss. This was a double revenge — and always thanks to the play of Life. The Popes became enthusiastic humanists, they had secretaries who spoke and wrote beautiful Latin. They began to make collections of manuscripts and of stone engravings, never suspecting the dangerous fascination of all this. With a very human inconsequence, they set up again the statues of the gods which had been the horror of the Middle Ages. The Popes of the Renaissance are all interesting. They show us the most astonishing mixtures of vices and virtues, which make of them princes, tyrants, humanists, patrons of art, skilful diplomatists — *uncles* and, if we are either surprised or scandalised at all this, it must be that we know nothing of the whirl and eddy of all history, that we have no conception of Life, and no philosophy whatever.

Ever since Charlemagne, France had held supremacy in all that concerned Latin learning Pius II took this supremacy from France and implanted in Rome the invention of printing. He read Virgil's eclogues with more fervour than his breviary, and they inspired him with an admiration for Nature. In his native town of Pienza, he built himself a rustic palace with pilasters, facing that Mount Amiata, that extinct volcano, the sad-

ness of which he had loved in his childhood. In Rome, he gave his audiences on the lawn of one of his country villas. All this is like a gleam of the eighteenth century.

Paganism intoxicated the pilots of the Christian barque with antique beauty and with wild ambitions. The Church only thought now of establishing its political pre-eminence firmly, as it had established its dogmatic pre-eminence. It had an army, artillery, mercenaries, condottieri who wore hats of the same shapes as those of the cardinals. It had its spies, too, and it had the Inquisition — an invention of the monks.

The Pontifical Court must needs be equal to any of the other Italian Courts, with regard to luxury. This was necessary in order to maintain its prestige in the eyes of the humble, as well as in the eyes of the great. The vicars of Jesus Christ were now clothed in the richest stuffs, "they had jewels like women, tiaras, mitres, croziers of fabulous price; rings, crosses, chaplets set with the most precious gems." They were childishly inconsequent. Paul II, the handsome Venetian, "*Il formoso*," gave the red robe to the Cardinals and the *gualdrape*, of the same colour, to their horses. The altars were resplendent with the glitter of the gold and silversmith's work, the vestries were arranged for storing treasures and, what is well worth noting, the Christian religion, like the Pagan religion of former times, was no longer anything but a pompous worship.

The Popes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had a brilliant court, flatterers, parasites, but they were isolated and surrounded by enemies. A very natural

instinct prompted them to seek the protection of their own families. When they had nephews or sons, which was often the case in those times, they cut clothes for them out of St. Peter's robe, out of his sacred and holy patrimony, a precedent that Italy might have invoked. These Uncle-Popes raised their families to the nobility, thus giving themselves princes and dukes for relatives, which was a very ingenious way of raising themselves to the nobility. They created a new aristocracy in this way which, foreign though it was to Rome, established itself there and eclipsed the aboriginal nobility, the Colonnas, the Orsinis, the Caetaris, etc. Thanks to these Popes, we have the fine palaces of the Renaissance and their wonderful collections. Every one should see the portrait of Innocent X, by Velasquez, in the Dorian Gallery of Rome. In my opinion, it is the finest portrait that has ever been painted. The face is ugly and vulgar, it is the face of a miser, of a money-lender even, but in those eyes of metallic blue, eyes in which the soul is so living that it holds you there for a long time, there is a poignant sadness, the sadness of disillusion, the knowledge of the ingratitude of his own family. It is, perhaps, the first time that such grief has been caught and rendered so perfectly. At certain moments, all the Uncle-Popes must have had that expression in their eyes. Peace be with the Uncle-Popes!

In order to keep up the pontifical magnificence of the epoch, money was necessary, and very much money. This had to be procured, and so money was made out of everything. Impositions were levied, prebends were sold and money was even made out of St. Peter's throne,

which Innocent VIII bought. Absolution was sold and so much was paid for adultery, so much for homicide and so much for parricide. "The Curia," it appeared, "was the receptacle of avarice, of lust and of hypocrisy." The celebrated humanist, Lorenzo Valla, said: "There is no longer any religion, there is no longer any fear of God and, what is horrible to relate is that, the godless ones give the Pope's example as an excuse for all their crimes."

The Church, like the Empire before it, was on its way to the abyss. Pope Alexander VI, who came of a family of Spanish adventurers, had three illegitimate children. The Borgo, where he dwelt with them, had become such a place of abominations that it seemed as though the soul of Nero had once more taken possession of it. And nevertheless this Pope, who was as corrupt as the worst of the Emperors, governed all the Christian world. He was powerful enough to be able to give to Spain and Portugal, "de motu proprio," "discovered and undiscovered lands."

The Church, at enormous cost, built the temple which was to incarnate its dream of Universal domination, and this temple was destined to take such domination away from the Church forever. Was I not right in saying that it, like us, is the plaything of Life? For this temple, which was to draw to it all Christianity, the Popes asked for beauty of every kind. Thanks to sin-money, they were able to call architects, sculptors, painters, mosaicists, goldsmiths and gilders to Rome. Multitudes of brains began to work and marvellous things were created. The foundations of the Basilica

were soon visible, the walls rose and, finally, the dome of Bramanta and Michael Angelo stood out like a labarum against the sky of the Holy City. The Renaissance put its seal on the splendid Basilica. We are reminded of Jupiter's loves, by the bronze castings of the principal door, representing Europa on the bull, Ganymede carried away by the eagle, and Leda with the swan. At the very entrance to the Christian sanctuary, it is Paganism which welcomes us. Had it not this right? To those who can read symbols, this one is a revelation.

And quite close to this new St. Peter's, the fortress Palace, built by Nicholas V gradually became more rich and more ornate; rooms and niches were prepared in which to place the Olympian gods, that were taken out of the dust and brought thither at great cost. The gods from Olympus in the dwelling of the Vicar of Jesus Christ! Is that not fine? When I discovered the bust of my beloved Zeus there, that figure so expressive of strength and kindliness, I felt a curious joy, and I smiled mischievously. At present, as a novelist, I admire all this.

Such magnificence cost enormous sums of money and the inconsequent Church was indiscreet enough to make use of St. Peter's keys. It put Paradise as the prime to win, and, as sins and crimes had never been so numerous, indulgences sold well — they were sold too well and too openly.

Humanism, science and art had improved the human mind, so that it was now ripe for examining things freely. The individual now came out of the mass.

Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, who were, perhaps, quite sincerely indignant at this traffic in divine forgiveness, brought about that religious revolution which has been called the Reformation and which, in its turn, was to engender Protestantism. Protestantism was, and still is, the intellectual and moral counterpoise destined to maintain equilibrium in the Western soul. The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, lost the most cultivated nations of Europe. There was to be not only a Christianism, but a Lutheran Christianism and a Calvinistic Christianism and each of these was to engender other varieties. And there was to be a Protestant soul, a Protestant mentality and a Protestant art. And there were also to be religious wars, brothers who were to be enemies. The human struggle was to be intensified and on our planet there was to be more suffering, more bloodshed, there were to be more tears. There was to be more Life, too, and of a superior essence. There was a reason for all this, since all this took place.

The shock of this revolution roused the Catholic Church from the state into which it had fallen. It saw the precipice at last and drew back. Hurling anathemas at Germany, Geneva and England, it began to amend its ways, to discipline itself, to pull itself together. It was saved by the very Reformation which had hoped to annihilate it. Is not this cruelly fine? Providence, which needed it for long centuries yet, sent it the man who was to aid it in its struggles against heresy and heretics. One morning, in the Chapel of Notre-Dame of Montmartre, in Paris, Ignatius Loyola, a romantic, delicate student, made a vow,

together with five of his companions, to go to the Holy Land and convert the Mussulmans. It was thanks to this vow, inspired perhaps by the atavic cellules of some ancestor who had been a Crusader, that a militant order, that of the Jesuits sprang up, an order which was to *serve* the Papacy *in a masterful manner.* Its founder was born about the same time as Luther and Calvin. Luther was born in 1483, Loyola in 1491 and Calvin in 1509. These three fateful dates show that the gods not only create the struggle, but that they direct it. In the sixteenth century, this struggle became intense.

Paul III, like a skilful general, gave to the Church the unity which it lacked. He called together the famous Œcumenic Council of Trent. This Council, without taking into account the discoveries of science, the inevitable law of progress, stopped human thought, like a clock, at the date of 1545. It decreed the celibacy of priests, it reorganised the discipline of the Church and its hierarchy, and gave absolute authority to the Popes. It made use of the spiritual forces that the Church had neglected. In the Middle Ages, the confessional did not exist, only the deadly sins were, as a rule, confessed. The Church now formally inaugurated the confessional boxes; it encouraged the human soul, absolved, comforted and guided it, not always heavenwards, but more often towards the political end it had itself in view. By means of this brilliantly thought out institution, the Church was able to penetrate into the family, into conjugal privacy, and to hold in subjection the consciences of its followers. By means of the Inquisition and the Papal Index, it cut the wings of

Thought. When an individual rose above the masses, it brought him down to that level, the low-water mark of which it regulated, or else it did away with him. The humanists, the learned men and the artists, all those creatures of light, had made of Rome a free, open city, where one was glad to live and to let live. The Church closed it again for many centuries, surrounded it with a sacerdotal wall, the most Chinese of all walls, at the foot of which, waves and waves of ideas dashed and then broke. Theocratic tyranny paralysed all will, destroyed valuable energy and caused the movement of civilisation to be much more slow. The Popes were now kings! Among these King-Popes, were some who were ferociously cruel to the heretic brothers. Pius IV and Pius V were among these Popes. There were others who were very remarkable, such, for instance, as Sixtus Quintus, the shepherd who had never been able to lead his flock of four-footed sheep, but whom Providence transformed into an admirable shepherd of men. There were King-Popes who were nobly unselfish. Clement IX took spiritual and material help to the sick in the hospitals, and had twelve poor people every day at his own table. When the famous Palarina, the bell of the Capitol which announced the death of the sovereign Pontiffs, tolled for him, it made all hearts sorrowful. This was rare, for the Romans never loved their Popes.

For centuries the Church continued its dream of temporal sovereignty, using all the means that its policy approved and that Christianism disapproved. It defended the peninsula against the barbarians, against

Germany, against France, against Spain, against England. All this time it thought it was working for itself, and it was working — for the Italians, who did not yet exist as a nation. The Catholic Church *was to keep Rome for Rome.* Is not that fine?

At present, the Popes only possess the Borgo, a space of land between Mont Mario and the Janicula which, curiously enough, *was never a part of Rome.* In olden times it was "the field of the oracles." When Leo IV surrounded it with walls, in the fourth century, he little thought that he was preparing a citadel for a far-off successor — but the gods knew. The Pope is no longer king, and he has never been so much respected and so worthy of respect. He has never been so great, for his kingdom is no longer of this world.

The Roman Catholic Church is now living the downward branch of its parabola, and it will, no doubt, live it for a long time yet. If I am not mistaken, it is at the same phase as Paganism after the Augustan century. Animals, prepared for the altars, did not find many customers. *Sin-money,* if not sin, was getting rare. In the upper classes, people believed very little in the immortality of the soul, or in hell, and the source of artistic inspiration from Olympus, was dried up forever.

At present, Catholic priests complain that their perquisites, and this means the money for masses, are greatly on the decrease. There are fewer and fewer men in the churches, and when they do go they look like little boys fulfilling some necessary duty. They no longer have the frank and manly attitude which comes from sincere conviction. In their attitude, in

the way they hold their heads, *in their very shoulders*, an absence of sincere conviction is evident. Religion is handed over to women and children and, what is still more grave, beauty has deserted it. Its art consists of Epinal pictures and images. Does this mean death? No, forms of worship and sects may die, but great religions evolve. This is what Catholicism will do.

Terrestrians, the mass of them, at any rate, like the symbolical Buddha, with lowered eyes, have not yet looked at anything but their navel. They have evidently found that interesting, since it has sufficed for them for so many centuries, but they are now endeavouring to escape from its primitive fascination. Their subjective conception of the God-Man is still childish. They are looking for him in the Beyond of their dreams, of their poor dreams. Their vision and their comprehension are, no doubt, too feeble for them to be able to read that Bible of Nature into which he poured out for them, in streams, the hope of immortality, that Bible in which each of his thoughts, in the form of a creation, reaches them *living* through numberless hierarchies. The priests of Science have been occupied for a long time, though, in inventing instruments with which men can decipher the divine manuscripts and learn at last to know the God of the Universe.

I possess a tiny microscope, in which I have seen wonders that have brought delicious tears to my eyes. One day, I showed a drop of water to the chambermaid of my hotel. When she saw it inhabited and swarming, she was seized with admiration mingled with awe. She asked my permission to fetch her husband to see it, and

he was much more moved by it than she had been. His big fingers trembled with emotion. "That gives a wonderful idea of God," he said. "If we only knew things, we should not go about *cursing and swearing*, but we don't know, and we are brought up like animals." He was quite right, "we do not know things." In our churches there might very well be an altar to the "Unknown God," as there was at Athens. It is this God who will reveal religious evolution to us, and it was only to take place through Roman Catholic Christianism. Curiously enough, this idea came to me one Sunday, about three years ago in Milan Cathedral, during High Mass. At the altar, which is very high, a priest, in rich, sacerdotal vestments, dominated the kneeling believers. A ray of sunshine, which poured in through one of the stained glass windows of the choir, dyed, with hyacinth shades, the bluish convolutions of the incense. Above this cloud, so wonderfully coloured with rainbow tints, I saw the officiating priest raise the golden vessel, in which, under the appearance of bread and wine, humanity and divinity mingled. With the most perfect harmony, the organ accompanied the words of the oblation. For the first time, and I am not proud of this confession, I was conscious of the symbolical grandeur of the Mass, which, from my very childhood, had always bored me intensely. From the altar, my eyes travelled to the assembled crowd. The people were all kneeling *pêle-mêle*, on chairs, or on the marble floor, the woman of the people side by side with the wealthy citizen, and the beggar-woman by the side of the great lady, in an *equality*,

which had not been arranged, but was *absolutely natural.* I realised then that the Roman Catholic Church is the only place on earth in which one could have that *sensation* of fraternal equality. I said to myself that, after all, Christ had never left Peter's barque, and that it was there that the evolution of all Christianism was evidently to take place. I had already started on my cruise round Life, but I did not know then that the psychical currents would ever urge my barque on towards this reef of religion and yet, "li per li," as the Italians say, my cerebral cellules had commenced, instantaneously, to weave a dream of religious evolution. And this dream continued. I left it hundreds of times and then I took it up again, just as one might do with a piece of embroidery and now it is to serve. Is not all this wonderful?

I have imagined the coming of that Pope, who will also be a Reformer, that Pope whom all Catholic Christian *thinkers* are awaiting like another Messiah, the Pope who will say courageously and honestly: "Yes, the Roman Catholic Church has a number of black pages in its history, a number of sanguinary pages, of shameful pages, but it also has some luminous and glorious ones. And these pages, all of which contain germs of progress and of the future, were written by the Providence of God. Men have lived them and have made them live. Yes, the Church has burnt living bodies, invented tortures by the side of which the crucifixion was a gentle one, it has tortured heretics whilst singing psalms. It dominated barbarity by means of a still greater barbarity. The epoch required this homœ-

opathic treatment and *you have no right to judge it with your present-day mentality.* The Church has caused much suffering, but it has given still more consolation and joy. It has helped the outcasts, lent its ear to their complaints in the confessional, softened the anger of the humble against the great, with the hope of future compensations. It has also maintained social equilibrium. It has enriched the human soul with fresh sentiments, it has created an ideal of psychical beauty, of purity which still charms and touches you. Into this gulf of twenty centuries, which represents Christianism, it has flung poetry, numberless master-pieces and the elements of your philosophy and modernism. The Roman Catholic Church has given you beliefs, which you now reject, because you have grown up, *but they have helped you to grow up.* These dogmas were not untruths, but symbols and images which hid the truth that was too dazzling for your eyes as children. Your adult age asks for this truth at present, and the Church will teach it to you." And this Pope will feel that the Church cannot allow itself to be left behind by Science in the knowledge of Divine work. Instead of breviaries, he will put into the hands of his priests and monks, telescopes, microscopes, the instruments and all the apparatus necessary for the study of physics and chemistry, so that they may read the book of revelation.

I can imagine, and I envy the emotion of those priests and of those monks who will *see* God, for they will *see* Him, in the depths of the heavens and of the ocean, in the infinitely great and in the infinitely small. And

these priests and these monks, instead of continuing to repeat theological mysteries in their pulpits, and imaginary miracles about which even the most pious of their listeners no longer care to hear, will speak of the mysteries and miracles of Nature, of the sprouting of corn, of the fecundation of flowers and of fermentation. They will unroll that magnificent ladder of progression, which all creatures are mounting, and which shows us God as the Conqueror of Death. And Religion then, born of fear, will become love. And these monks and these priests will learn to know man, no longer from the note-books of the seminarist which only contain his dregs, but from Nature, which will reveal to them his true essence. They will then present love and marriage as the sacred rites of Life, and will place them so high that they will make pornography appear a blasphemy. And these priests and these monks will preach moral and physical cleanliness, heroism, patriotism, the small and great virtues. They will preach not only charity, but a broad and profound humanitarianism, which is to be extended to all beings, to the animal as to a lesser brother. And under their inspiration, magnificent temples will be built to the Master of the Universe. Their altars and their tabernacles will be made of the most precious materials. They will be decorated with the humblest and the rarest of plants, with master-pieces of Nature and of Art. The most delicate incense and the purest wax will be burnt there. The most beautiful hymns which have ever been composed to the glory of God will be sung there in chorus. There will be ancient hymns, Hebraic hymns and the Christian hymns

and canticles. And men will come there in numbers, as to a centre of Science and Light. Terrestrians, no matter to what creed they belong, will be able to go there to worship and to pray, for it will no longer be the Church that excludes, but the open temple of the living God. The collection plate, which the priest will raise with a beautiful gesture of offering to God, will have upon it the widow's mite and the millionaire's cheque, and this will no longer be sin-money but money given out of love. And from the citadel of the Vatican, from "the field of the oracles," waves of inspiration will go forth, waves that will have been drawn from the living sources of Nature, and they will give us a superb artistic revival and fresh master-pieces. . . .

This is my dream and I am surprised myself at having dreamed it. Will it ever be realised? I am old enough to be a prophetess and, in the soul of this Earth, there are millions of dreams which want to be written.

In the meantime, the evolution of Christianism has certainly *commenced.* It commenced a long time ago. In the barbarous ages, religion and politics were one thing. That was necessary for the government of child nations. Providence has separated them. The operation was a painful one for the Roman Catholic Church, but, now that it is free of its gangue it will shine with a purer brilliancy, it will rise, it will become more spiritualised. That will mean progress for it and for us.

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Is the Cape of Tempests doubled? My barque, "The Why," still vibrates with the effort it has just made and, unless I am mistaken, the pilot has earned a draught of champagne.

CHAPTER XII

THERE are, in our lives as Terrestrians, marvellous phenomena of which we know, as yet, little else than the name, phenomena which we must learn to understand more thoroughly. They are well worth the trouble, I can vouch for that. These phenomena are: the metaphysical dream, faith, hope, divine love and prayer. I now find myself in the very midst of the *theologal* virtues. Nothing less than that! I should have been greatly surprised if any one had ever told me that the day would come when these would interest me more than the virtues of love.

On seeing me touch upon such a subject, many of my readers will leave me. When I was young, I should have done the same in their place. Some of them will leave me, remembering how bored they were in their childhood by these virtues, which were not understood even by those who taught them. Others will leave me because, in their opinion, the Roman Catholic Church alone has the right to teach and explain everything concerning God. Well, it does not matter! Those who have courage enough to come with me on my upward way will, perhaps, not regret this, as I am going to show them that the *theologal* virtues are metaphysical phenomena which are quite *natural*, and that they are produced by certain cellules of our motor like all our faculties.

There is such a thing as the superhuman, but there

is nothing *supernatural*, and there could not be anything supernatural. Everything is in *Nature*, the Beyond, the psychical world, God Himself. The Church has always tried to separate God from Nature. Fancy separating the Creator from His creation, from His work, from the forces that He engenders and governs! The idea of it seems foolish. Was not the Church inspired when it invented the *supernatural?* It certainly was, for this idea was *necessary for child nations*. The Catholic Church can only be justified to history, humanity and Life, thanks to *determinism*, which denies the personal influence of man over determination, which affirms that the Church, and all Churches, have been urged on, and are still being urged on, like the most humble amongst us, by irresistible motives. The Roman Catholic Church does not know itself, or else it deceives us very cleverly, for it has always been *determinist*. It is very easy to see this if we study its work. It even has a little word, in its *theologal* vocabulary, which is rarely to be met with and which reveals a great deal. It is the word *premotion*. It means: "the action of God determining the will of the creature to act." Bossuet was as much a determinist as Diderot must have been when he said: "The ball which killed Turenne had been founded in all eternity." That was determinist literature. The Church, too, was, and still is, an unconscious modernist. By inspiration, or, as it says, by revelation, which is really the same thing, it knew a quantity of Nature's metaphysical secrets before Science did. By sifting what there was in man, the Church discovered the existence of *theologal* forces

which it put into action, used, abused, dominated in its own interests and, it is only fair to add, in the interests of humanity. If we want justice ourselves, we must be just to others.

Pius X himself, by doing away with many of the fêtes which interrupted work, by ridding the Church of the great display necessary in former days, and by democratising it, was, without knowing it, preparing modernism. This was only as far as discipline was concerned, of course. The rest was to come later on, in its own good time.

Religious romanticism created the metaphysical dream and the mystical dream. This dream peopled Paradise and hell with personages as fictitious as those of literature, but, in spite of this, these personages have an existence. Their deeds, which are for the most part imaginary, are helpful to Life. And this seems to me to be the miracle of miracles.

It may seem that I use the word *dream* very frequently and carelessly. I like the word, certainly, not only for its sound, but on account of the immense thing it represents. It is the work of certain cellules which manufacture the ideal for which we are to live or die, and I feel this work more and more distinctly.

Protestantism tempers, and frequently kills, spiritual romanticism. The great religions, such as Buddhism, Roman Catholic Christianism, and Islamism exalt this, on the contrary, by means of their mysteries, their ceremonies, their ventures into the Beyond. We find this in the lives of the saints written by the monks of the first centuries. Their productions betray an ardent,

childish, perverse imagination, or rather an imagination perverted by the subjectivity of the man living on himself and not troubling about the truth of things. The Primitives in literature are much less chaste than the Primitives in painting. Providence used this element for making its priests, and its holy men and women who were needed for charitable work, for penetrating into the masses, for social economy, for grouping together beings who, alone, would have been useless. And Providence took back from these individuals all that it had given them: country, home, family, individuality and liberty. It clothed them in a special, strange way, so that they might be better separated from their fellow-beings. It marked them with an ineffaceable seal. It made use of their ambitions, of their desire for wealth, for the benefit of the Order in which it had enrolled them. It obliged them to live poor in the midst of wealth. It killed more or less rapidly, and never without suffering, the instincts which might have been hostile to its plan. It stopped the development of their intellect, or circumscribed its activity. In short, it made them renew their very soul. It bound them over by vows, by a few simple words of immense import and, like us, they were held firmly by the Invisible. It is possible to escape from a stone prison, we cannot escape from the Invisible. Providence sometimes carved out for them a superhuman task. It sent them on a mission to savages, to cannibals. It was as though it found an artist's pleasure in putting the highest psychical forces in presence of the most primitive psychical forces. It sent them out, physically

healthy, to tend lepers, to die for them and through them. It sent them out to its convict prisons, to its earthly hells, to take there the hope of a better life. And it is with wonderful art that the gods always arrange these strange destinies. The currents which they govern will put, for instance, into a girl's brain, into cellules that have been gradually prepared for this, the *leit motiv* of a spiritual dream, those words put purposely, perhaps, into the mouth of Christ: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." And the beautiful, rich, beloved girl loves this jealous Master. His image, like a cinematographic vision, is formed at the back of her forehead, it penetrates her and draws her along irresistibly. She turns away from mankind and looks above. She sees herself clothed in sackcloth, wearing the veil or the nun's bonnet, with a halo of sanctity around her head. The halo is the secret ambition of those who are interested in metaphysics. The girl likes to picture herself in this way, for vanity enters into everything and works together with everything. The social position of a saintly woman is not to be despised. If the elected one should have the maternal instinct, her heart will open to children, to the sick, to the weak. If she be a conqueror, she will be ambitious for distant missions, for dangerous out-posts; and if she be a *grande amoureuse*, she will love the cloister and will delight in renunciations. Her prayers will become passionate colloquies, not with God, as there are liberties one cannot take with Him, but with Christ, with some personage of the Beyond — Her wild dream takes her to the doors of a convent.

She knocks, the door opens and closes behind her. Her force, or her weakness, is then *poured forth* into a community, together with other forces and other weaknesses. Some of these women may continue striving after an ideal that they will never reach, and they are then happy with a happiness which is not of this world. This is the exception, and the very rare exception. Others touch earth more or less rapidly and, in some cases, this touching earth is so disastrous that the victims die of it. As a rule, though, the regular, disciplined life in common, with its thousands of childish preoccupations, and the desire to be approved by the director, or confessor, who is the shepherd of the flock, creates a kind of state of grace. Providence chooses its religious auxiliaries in the humblest, as well as in the highest classes and, in the weaving of their destinies, it proves itself an incomparable novelist. Every church, even the most humble one, every monastery, every abbey is an incarnated dream, a human dream, dreamed on the heights and ought, consequently, to inspire the philosopher, the poet and the artist with tender respect.

Some years ago, I do not remember how many, as I no longer count the years, I visited the Convent of the Carmelites, at Tours, which had just been evacuated. The big, hard, cold nest was empty. All the open doors, as though with the same angry gesture, seemed to be saying: "Look and see for yourselves where and how we lived!" I went forward respectfully, with muffled tread, towards the bare cells. There, within that narrow space, delicate women, the majority of them refined women, had shut themselves up, in order to for-

get the world and to win heaven. There they had slept, prayed, and loved a mystical spouse. Was this not beautiful, or was it folly? It was, perhaps, beautiful and at the same time folly. When I visited the chapel, I pictured them there, at the night service, chanting in their dreamy voices and, in their sleepiness, letting the heavy, black breviaries fall sometimes. And as I walked on through the cloisters, innumerable "Whys and Wherefores" came to my lips. In an inner court-yard, there were a few shrubs, around which a tangle of impoverished verdure was growing. This was, probably, all that these Carmelites had known of Nature. On leaving, I turned round for a last look. There was a softened, strange light of many shades of grey, a veritable purgatory light, which seemed specially fitting for departed souls, or for the great black and white birds which had just been driven away from their convent. From a purely artistic point of view I regretted the expulsion. When I was once more out in the sunny street, in the vibrating air, I drew a long breath of relief. Formerly I should have apostrophised St. Theresa roundly, but I knew that she and her sisters had done nothing but live out what had been written for them. She said herself: "These houses of the Order, which are the houses of God," and further on: "I consider their affairs as God's affairs!"

Why did Providence shut up so many human beings in cloisters? Why was a seal put upon their lips? Was it not, perhaps, because these extremely impressionable creatures needed a superhuman ideal? Was it not that if they had been free to come and go in the

world, they would have been very unhappy, or they would have fomented grave disorder there? Convents are also, perhaps, safety valves. Since there have been fewer convents, the number of neurasthenic persons has considerably increased and "Homes of Rest" are being founded everywhere. Our first idea was that the disbanding of the religious congregations had been cruelly ordained, for it is always Providence who puts the pick-axe into the hands of builders, destroyers and reconstructors, but the wind of the evolution which has swept over them will prolong their existence. In the struggle which all this brought about, the useless ones and the weak ones will die out, but the others will have an increase of life. This is the eternal law. If some of the great religious Orders which were expelled are necessary to the humanity of France, they will be brought back to their houses. There will be more wisdom in future, on their side and on the side of their adversaries, and this will mark considerable progress. There was a great amount of needless sentimentality on the subject of the eviction of the religious orders. If I know anything of human nature, those who were evicted *enjoyed* their *persecution*. Judge for yourselves! Persecution in a country of extreme civilisation, and in the midst of the twentieth century, is by no means a commonplace thing! Under the monk's cassock and the nun's dress, hearts must have beaten with holy anger, and fits of holy anger must seem good! Some of the priests and nuns will have prayed in a Christian way for their persecutors and will have felt their halos becoming more luminous. That, too, could

not have been disagreeable. And then what proofs of esteem, of affection and of gratitude they must have received! After all, the gods put plenty of honey into the cup of bitterness they were offering, and I do not blame them for it.

When I was about sixteen, I was visiting some relatives who lived in a town near which was a celebrated community of Trappists. The Brother who was entrusted with the commercial transactions in the town, brought butter, eggs, vegetables and fruit, every week, to the house at which I was staying. He liked talking and was delighted to take a cup of black coffee with us. He was a man of about forty, tall, with beautiful eyes, as brown as his garments, a nose like Don Quixote's and a large mouth, ever ready for smiles and gaiety. Under his monk's garb, he appeared to be a gentleman. It was very evident that he was not accustomed, like the Brother who accompanied him, to carry baskets. In a brusque, awkward manner, he would put the handle on his arm and then, as though it inconvenienced him, pass it on to the other arm, and, very soon afterwards, change arms again. This was irresistibly droll and it amused me immensely. One day, I was daring enough to ask him how he had come to be a Trappist? My question, put in this way, seemed less indiscreet. He looked down for a moment, as though deliberating whether to satisfy my curiosity and then, looking up again, he said with a smile: "You see, Mademoiselle, I belong to a large family, every member of which is over head and ears in the business or the pleasures of this world. I read one day that it was

necessary for one to sacrifice himself for all, and so I left the regiment of cuirassiers, in which I was a lieutenant, and I came to the Trappe to pray and work. Six months ago, when the Emperor paid us a visit, I asked to be allowed to serve at table just to see whether he would recognise me. He looked at me several times, as one does when one cannot think of the name of a person who seems familiar and then, all at once, mine came back to him and his surprise was very amusing. He then talked to me in the kindest way possible. He asked whether I did not find the rules rather hard. I told him that military discipline had prepared me and that I considered myself still a soldier, but in another Order. I must confess that it was a great pleasure to see him again, and also General F—— who was with him, but I felt no regret for my former life. Last week," continued the monk, his face lighting up, "one of our Fathers died. We took it in turns, in groups, to stay with him day and night, so that he should have us with him to the end of his pilgrimage. He asked us all to forgive him and said, 'Good-bye, until we meet again,' with an accent of absolute conviction. I was with him at the very last. His window was open and the singing of the birds accompanied the prayers for the dying. He had scarcely passed away when a huge ray of the setting sun came and made a shroud of light for him. This was very beautiful. An end like that is not paid for too dearly by a life of renunciation. I thought of you, Mademoiselle," added the worthy Brother, "and I said to myself that if you had been a witness of this, you might have been tempted to turn

Trappist too."—"I, a Trappist!" I exclaimed and, in my insolent youthfulness, I greeted the idea with a burst of laughter. This Don Quixotic monk was sentimental and romantic, one of those men whom women only understand when they do not belong to them. On thinking of him, I have sometimes said to myself that the Trappe had been his earthly salvation as well as his heavenly one. And a few words, flung by the gods into microscopic cellules, had sufficed for transforming a cuirassier into a Trappist. Is not that miraculous enough?

One day, in Paris, I happened to be crossing the Place des Victoires at noon. It was just the time when those employed in the banks, the workrooms and shops in the neighbourhood were leaving for their midday meal, and the square was filled with joyous uproar. From a side street two monks, whom I took to be Franciscans, emerged. It was just at the swarming-time of the congregations. The two monks were young and, with their crown of fair hair and their pink and white complexions, they looked like Alsatians. Their sackcloth garments, their bare feet in sandals and they themselves gave one the impression of remarkable cleanliness. They were each carrying a small bag, the real evangelical bag, which no doubt contained their entire worldly possessions. On finding themselves in the midst of this noisy crowd of workers just let loose, they looked round in rather a scared way. Their confusion increased when a band of young men and girls gathered round them, and pretended to bar their path. In a gentle, firm manner, but not without turning very red,

they endeavoured to make a way for themselves, but, out of pure mischief, the would-be jokers gathered more closely round them. A workman, in a blue blouse, who had been watching the little scene, called out to them roughly: "Will you stop it, you lot of idiots, and leave the Brothers in peace. The street belongs to them as much as it does to you. What if they are monks? That's what they chose to be. It takes all sorts to make a world. If all the men were to have families, there mightn't be enough to put in the children's mouths." These words of rough common sense took effect better than any sermon. The chain broke at once and the two Franciscans went on their way, but not without a glance of gratitude to their defender.

"It takes all sorts to make a world." And it was a man of the people who had discovered that! It was he who had had the intuition of this fundamental truth. I fancy that if we were capable of thoroughly investigating it, it would suffice for explaining Life to us.

Monks and nuns were necessary, it appears. With the exception of sectarians of narrow mentality, we all like to come across these living mysteries amongst us. We are not sorry to have *women of the temple* around our beds of suffering and misery. As they are free from all earthly cares, they have serene faces. Their thoughts soar above the humiliating horrors of sickness and their soul is modulated by prayer. The sanctuary has made their step light and, thanks to their contact with the various objects of religious worship, they have an exquisitely light touch and a kind of spiritual magnetism. These *women of the temple* are a great luxury

even, that the gods have prepared for our evil hours. One day, at Florence, I was surprised to see that my host, who was Swiss, and a great Calvinist, was being nursed by "a blue sister." "Ah, you see," he said, "for binding up a gouty man's leg, there is no one like a Catholic Sister. I know all about that! If only they had a little more science they would be divine nurses." And the man was quite right in this.

A preacher once said that "Philosophy is incapable of producing a Sister of Charity." Yes, but at the same time, it can tell us how and why Providence made them. And that is certainly something.

CHAPTER XIII

This metaphysical dream, which has produced heroes, martyrs, creatures with all kinds of hallucinations, mad people, wise people and invalids, which, after all, has been extremely useful to Life, is nourished and fed by hope, faith, love and prayer. Faith and hope are certainly the most superhuman and divine of our faculties, for faculties they decidedly are. "Faith," according to St. Paul, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This definition, which he gives in one of the Epistles to the Hebrews, is absolutely philosophical and scientific. No modernist could have spoken better. There certainly are, in our motor, two twin cellules, those which engender hope and faith. Hope is always weaving pictures of happiness, promises of love, glory, fortune and of Paradise, whilst faith has the *inward vision*. It has never been blind as it is said to be. It believes in a good which does not exist, which will, perhaps, never exist, and it gives us the joy of this good.

The creation of these two cellules, or of these two groups of cellules, would suffice for proving to us that God has pity on humanity and that He is alive to its sorrows. "A means of maintaining equilibrium," the sceptics will say. That may be, but does not equilibrium mean health, peace and happiness? "A decoy!" the pessimists will add. "We have all of us, more or less, believed in friendship, love, fidelity, and we

have all of us been deceived. We have all of us, more or less, believed in victory, and we have all been more or less vanquished!"

Yes, but we have all of us *believed.* Faith has stimulated our best cellules, those of will, courage, enthusiasm and we have created, in this way, reserves of forces which we have found in the days of our trials. Faith produces a sort of spiritual warmth which has a remarkable influence on the physique. The sick person who has faith in his doctor will get well much more readily and more quickly. His presence, and even his voice, will relieve the invalid in the strangest way; but faith, like love, does not come at command, it is a mystery of fluids and of affinities.

Religious faith is still more wonderful, for, as St. Paul says, "it is the evidence of things not seen." He means, of course, not seen with the eyes of the flesh. The priests of all religions, without exception, have demonstrated that which they have *not seen,* but with which they have been inspired and, by means of suggestion, they have communicated to the mass of humanity a *reflected faith.* They have inculcated belief in the existence of God, in future life, in punishments, in rewards, in the dogmas that they have elaborated, and humanity has believed blindly. They have *given it the Beyond,* they have opened the doors of this Beyond and, in all confidence, humanity has rushed towards it behind them, and has placed all its ambitions and its hopes of happiness on that Beyond.

Theologal forces have produced mysticism. Mysticism! Oh, heavens, into what a wasps' nest I am fall-

ing! I began to think of St. Catherine of Sienna and of St. Theresa, of those women, who, by the very intensity of their desire, *materialised* Christ. The word *materialised* is the right one, although it is a term used in spiritism. As I thought of these women, I saw before me an abyss so deep that I decided to pass on my way, professedly out of respect for the great mysteries of Nature. "The Other One" was not duped by my pretty phrase, but brought me back to the very edge of this abyss and, whether I would or not, I had to go down into it. At present I do not regret this at all.

Mysticism is the belief or the philosophy which admits the existence of secret communications between man and God. The Pagans were great mystics; they felt quite as much, if not more than Christians, the action of the Divinity on all beings, and even on all things. They believed that this action could only work by means of Incarnation. This seemed to them an absolutely natural phenomenon. And, after all, is not God incarnated in everything? This conviction was perpetuated in Roman Catholic Christianism. All the waves of human thoughts which, during centuries, had been attracted by the Infinite, produced Plato, the thinker who ascended the greatest number of the Olympian summits, whose philosophy is the highest expression of the metaphysical ideal. This ideal is the synthesis of Paganism. The tree had now given its fruit. It was destined not to die, for death does not exist, but to be transformed into Christianism. Plato was an intellectual mystic and an essentially Western mystic. Christ, who was to spiritualise the Western soul, was

an Oriental and, thanks to his Orientalism, his religion, like all the great religions, had its "secret garden." In this garden, Jesus sowed simple, wholesome flowers, of vivifying fragrance; flowers of love, of kindness and of forgiveness. Then came the Asiatic monks, from the barbarous East, who despised these humble plants, the virtues of which had made the first Christians. They did not understand how to tend these plants and so allowed them to degenerate or to perish. They then scattered amongst them the seed of strange, complex plants of poisonous aspect, plants which intoxicated men by their violent scents and which were cruel to the fingers that plucked them. These monks made of Catholicism a two-headed eagle. There is the Catholicism which I shall call classic and secular, and then the romantic and regular Catholicism.

The classic and secular Catholicism is the one that we all know more or less. It prescribes obedience to the commandments of God and of the Church, an absolute belief in the dogmas of this religion, and the practice of its worship. It is simple, rigid, almost mathematical in character. It puts a little ideal into a whole multitude of commonplace, terribly sordid lives. It colours these lives by means of the poetry of its symbols and of its ceremonies. It gives traditions and an ecclesiastical family to those who have not either, and that is enormous! It teaches thousands of creatures to feel their soul and their conscience, it develops in them the inner life. This Catholicism is that of the great majority.

Romantic and regular Catholicism transports the individual into a more elevated metaphysical zone. This

is, fortunately, the Catholicism of the few, for its ecstasies would unhinge too many minds. In this zone, prayer becomes the orison, that is the fusion, the direct colloquy with the Divinity, and this is only obtained after more or less long practice. Confession, that act which answers to a need of our nature and which, in itself, is wholesome and beneficent, becomes a spiritual communion, with a director whose duty it is to initiate the penitent into the phenomena of mysticism, to guide him along the paths which lead to the "secret garden," to the zone of visions, of *ecstasies*, of miracles! There are three of these paths, it appears, each of which leads to the other two: the purgatorial path, the illuminative path and the unitive path. In the purgatorial path, one tries, by means of frequent fasting, and voluntary mortifications, to get into a state supposed to be *supernatural*, but which, in reality, is only too *natural*. After this, one enters the illuminative path and feels one's self penetrated and guided by a celestial light. Finally, one reaches the unitive path, where one has the *sensation* of the loving union of the Creator with His creature. This must certainly be an extraordinary sensation, even if only created by the imagination. Millions of simple, pious Catholics know nothing of the existence of this mysticism, and if they were to know of it, they would consider it dangerous and immoral. There are, though, among the extremely romantic Catholics, a certain number who are affiliated with the Dominicans and with the Franciscans, who follow as closely as possible their religious practices, imitate their austerities, wear hair-cloth under their fashion-

able clothes, discipline themselves and have a confessor and a director. To what degree of initiation do they arrive? This I do not know, but their poor little flights must be very grotesque, and yet they must feel immense satisfaction as far as their vanity is concerned, for, in Parisian slang, "they think they are in it."

I have been into this "secret garden." I did not, of course, go by the usual paths, as they are barred to outsiders, but I took the path of thought. I hovered for rather a long time over its enclosure, I saw some of the great mystics and I endeavoured to surprise the truth. I wonder whether I succeeded? Future discoveries will decide this.

For the last two months, I have had several books on my sofa, where I always read. These books are: The Life of St. Francis of Assisi and of St. Claire, "I Fioretti di Santo Francesco," The Life of St. Dominic, The Life of St. Catherine of Sienna and The Life of St. Theresa. I plunged into this high flight literature unwillingly, thinking that "The Other One" certainly makes me do strange things. In a very little time, I began to feel unexpected pleasure and, as I read on, I was perfectly delighted.

In these Lives of Saints, published in the orthodox precincts of St. Sulpice, I felt, with private jubilation, the unconscious modernism of Catholic thought. Oh, it is moving along, slowly perhaps, like that tortoise, which so humoristically represents the Church at the feet of Christ, in the chancel of St. Paul-beyond-the-Walls at Rome. Like the tortoise, though, it does move. These lives of the saints, in a charming edition

with a blue cover, are much better written than such books were formerly. One feels in them a care for truth, and our twentieth-century mentality is also respected. At the same time, they are rigidly orthodox, although they do attribute to legend and tradition the miracles that are too barbarous, such for instance as the gift of the rosary to St. Dominic by the Virgin, and the Resurrection of Napoleon Orsini, the nephew of Cardinal de Fossanova. The Life of St. Catherine of Sienna, by the Comtesse de Flavigny, published some thirty years ago, was absolutely fantastical and improbable, and well calculated for making the thinker distrustful. Out of loyalty to the Catholic Church, I refused to lend it to a Protestant friend who asked me for it. Those who are interested in all the manifestations of Life will find these mystical novels, which take place in the Beyond, a thousand times more captivating than our profane novels.

I envied the gods, more particularly, the weaving of the romance of St. Francis of Assisi. This seems to me a beautiful metaphysical love story.

The son of the merchant Bernardone, known as Brother Francis, preached the Lent sermons of 1212 in St. George's Church at Assisi. He was small, thin and plain-looking, but his eyes were full of spiritual light and his voice was warm. Instead of repeating over and over again the dogmas and praises of the Church, he spoke of the life of Nature and translated this into images which his poetical genius coloured. Among his listeners, was the soul that was destined for him, that was to live his dream with him and collaborate

in his work of reaction; a soul that had been, perhaps, known and loved in a former existence, that of Claire Scefi, a noble, beautiful, wealthy girl, who seemed to have been created uniquely for a society life. By means of what fluids and of what forces did Providence unite, or reunite, these two beings? We cannot know this, but it must have been a marvellous piece of work. The words of Brother Francis enlightened and penetrated the girl's mind. He became her spiritual director and I fancy that this accounted for the "grandeur, virginity, gentleness, perfect union with Jesus, with the Lady Poverty."

He transmitted to her his ideal, fascinated her for Christ's sake and led her on to a mystical engagement with Christ. Listen to this: "One evening, towards midnight, she left her father's palace, accompanied by a few of her friends, and hastened to the Chapel of the Portioncule, where, three years previously, Francis had celebrated his own union with 'Poverty,' the *widow of Christ!* The Franciscan Brothers, who were awaiting her, advanced to meet her, chanting as they came, and led her to the altar. 'My daughter, what do you want?' asked the saint. 'God,' answered the bride-elect, 'the god of the manger and of Calvary.' And then, on her knees, with bare feet, she laid down all that she had of any value, silk garments and jewels, which the Brothers were to distribute among the poor. Francis took up the scissors and cut off the girl's fair hair; he put on her a robe of ash-grey colour, girdled with a cord, covered her head with a coarse veil and put sandals on her feet." Claire then pronounced the three

vows which put an insurmountable barrier between herself and the world, the evil and the good. Was it not the engagement of Claire and Francis that was celebrated in the Chapel of the Portioncule, rather than that of the girl and Christ? I think so, and I hope so.

Under the inspiration of him who had become her master, more than any man has ever been the master of any woman, Claire founded the mendicant order of the "Poor Ladies." Francis established her in the poetical hermitage of St. Damien, not far from his own convent, and insisted on strict seclusion for her. This foundation, which they had organised together, must have necessitated long and frequent conversations which, I do not doubt, were a source of superhuman, but not supernatural, happiness to them both. All through this wonderful romance, lived on the metaphysical plane, there are adorable scenes, scenes that are supremely touching and dramatic. Earthly love, set in spirituality as in rubies, shines there with all the brilliancy of the diamond. Listen to this: "Claire had a great desire to eat with St. Francis." How divinely human this desire was! "He refused her this favour for a long time and he only granted it at the entreaty of his fellow monks." "As you think it should be thus," says St. Francis, "I agree with you, but, so that her pleasure may be greater, I should like the meal to take place here, at St. Mary-of-the-Angels. Claire has been shut up at St. Damien for so long a time, that she will certainly rejoice and be strengthened on seeing St. Mary's again, for it was here that we cut off her hair and that she became the bride of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in

the name of God, it is here that we will eat together."

And they ate together, for the first and last time. St. Francis had the repast prepared on the bare ground. "As soon as the first dish was served, the saint began to speak of God, in so marvellous a way that they felt themselves lost in Him." Was it in Him, or in each other that they felt lost? That was their secret, or rather the secret of Providence. What pleasure I should have had in imagining and analysing the joy of the poor recluse on feeling herself out in the open air, and on seeing once more the Umbrian country; and her emotion on finding herself once more in the chapel where she had taken her vows, and on visiting the convent where her master lived!

During the last years of his life, St. Francis had cut off all outward communication between St. Damien and the Portioncule. Perhaps this was because he did not feel his love to be as spiritual. He said, one day, to those who were praising him in an extravagant way: "Do not praise me too much, for I am still capable of having sons and daughters."

When Claire knew that Francis was mortally ill, she sent him word that she wanted to see him. He refused to let her come, but he promised her that she should see him again. He did not, perhaps, wish her to behold him in all the ugliness of dissolution, but in the beauty of death and that, too, was very human. He did receive the woman, though, whom he had liked next best to St. Claire, a Roman lady, Jacoba de Septemsoliis, whom he had surnamed his "Brother Jacqueline." "On hearing of the illness of the saint, she had has-

tened to him." No woman was allowed to enter the Portioncule, but an exception was made for the master's *comrade*. She brought with her the robe she had been weaving for him, the robe which was to serve for his mortuary garment. Thanks to a childishness which was curious enough, he wished to have a patch sewn on to it, as he did not think it *looked poor enough*. He was not ashamed of his disease before his friend, "Brother Jacqueline," who had the privilege of tending him during the last week of his life and of keeping vigil over his mortal remains. What would not the poor Abbess of St. Damien have given for this privilege! "In order to keep the promise that Francis had made, the funeral procession went towards the town, taking the road that passed by St. Damien. The body was carried into the Church and placed so near the grated window of the Sisters, that they could see their spiritual Father for the last time. And the Brothers took away the grating, through which the servants of God were accustomed to receive the Sacred Host, and they took the venerable body up from the stretcher and held it on their arms, in front of the window, as long as Madame Claire and the other Sisters wished, for their comfort and consolation."

What waves of sentiment and of spirituality must have been the outcome of these great scenes so admirably conceived! I have given them, because they are a revelation with regard to the mystic soul of which we know so little. In taking them from the history of St. Francis and St. Claire, the inveterate romance writer that I am has felt, in imagination, the joy and

the grief that were lived some seven centuries ago, and that was delicious. These are the miracles of God!

If it had not been for my great desire to be just, I should not have read the life of St. Dominic again. I had heard it read in the convent refectory, in what I call the fabulous days of my youth, and I had conceived a lively antipathy for him. I do not know whether, in a previous existence, I had belonged to the Albigenses, but the Dominican garb has always made a disagreeable impression on me. Two years ago, in Rome, I lunched with a Father from Aventine, a man of great culture, not a modernist, but modern and absolutely charming. He was a typical monk of the kind that civilisation has made, and yet I felt the strangest and most ridiculous embarrassment all the time I was with him.

After reading this life of St. Dominic again, my feeling towards this saint of the Inquisition has not changed, but I understand him better. Determinism makes me pity those who are doomed to cause suffering more than those who are doomed to suffer. "The life of every man," says the Swedish writer, Joergensen, "is merely the fruit of his own will." That is absolutely true, but, as the cellules which contain that will are given to him by God, those particular cellules and not any others, it is always and only the will of God that he carries out.

The great mystics of the East and of the West, *the mystics who have had visions*, the true mystics and the false ones, have all, whatever the priests may say, been suffering from that mysterious disease which we

call neurosis. The phenomena of this disease are so strange that, in barbarous times, they were considered supernatural. In the hospitals, stigmata, the odour of sanctity and the bleeding hands are well known. At the Salpétrière Hospital of Paris, apparent death, due to catalepsy can be seen, with stiffened limbs and knotted nerves. Then too, one sees fits of ecstasy and trances, when the poor human faces, with their rapturous expressions, seem to have a halo around them. Dostoiewski, the writer, was epileptic, and he declared that just before his attacks he used to have the most ecstatic joy. The Middle Ages were the great epoch for religious neurasthenia, and that is easily accounted for. The psychical currents, bearing along with them ideas and images, were neither as numerous nor as rapid in those days as they are at present. Mentalities were not well *ventilated.* For long centuries, Christian thought had been fed solely on the stories of the Old and New Testaments, on dogmas, legends, wonders and, above all, on the drama of the Passion. People almost fainted in front of the most lamentable Christs, and these could never be sufficiently agonising. With morbid compassion, people counted his bones and his wounds. They had not tears enough for the woes of the Virgin Mary; and all this without realising that they were living again, not the crucifixion of Christ, but the eternal crucifixion of humanity. All grain heaped up spoils, and this became tainted and the result was — *sick persons* — mystics. In some of their cerebral cellules, over-saturated with religion, thanks to a kind of spiritual mirage, all the sacred personages appeared to

them. By means of that duality which idealists and writers possess, they believed that they conversed with them. Priests and monks, instead of trying to cure them, kept up their *illusionism*, by means of their own dreams, by pictures of Paradise and hell, by fabulous wonders, by miracles performed, impossible to say how. It was thus that the Church, either out of ignorance or intentionally, I hope out of ignorance, created the mysticism which has been of such service to it.

In the case of neurasthenic people who were not pious, but rather incredulous, the visions were anything but religious ones, and it is the same at present. When they were flung on the ground, as though by invisible hands and when, foaming at the mouth, they writhed in horrible convulsions, when they uttered blasphemies and filthy words, they were supposed to be possessed by demons and, willingly or unwillingly, they had to submit to exorcism. There were bands of exorcists always ready among the clergy, and there was plenty of work for them. Doctors ought to have attended the poor unfortunates instead of these exorcists.

I, too, from ignorance (for who has not sinned out of ignorance) — I refused to believe in the visions and raptures of the saints. At present, I believe most of them to have been true and perfectly natural. I fancy that phenomena of this kind take place in the *frontal lobes*, where the metaphysical and all the other dreams take place. When these cellules are set going by the nerves, that is by conductors which are either at too great a tension, or that are too slack, or perhaps even knotted, they may produce all kinds of aberrations.

Are there not, in our brains, alvearies which distil the intoxication of love. And it is so certainly our motor which is the theatre of all this, that neither Christ, the Virgin, the Saints, nor yet any of the spirits evoked by mediums, have ever said anything to reveal beings existing on a higher plane than ours, or any other person than the one who made them talk. St. Dominic often slept in one of the churches. It would not, therefore, be surprising if, when at the foot of one of the altars of the Virgin, a film should have been formed behind his forehead representing her with the child Jesus offering her the chaplet with the fifteen ten beads, a film which led to the institution of the Rosary.

A French writer, I believe it was Stendhal, had a fancy to spend the night in St. Peter's of Rome. He hid in a confessional box and so got shut in the Church. In the morning, he was found in a swoon. His nerves and his imagination had not been able to bear the silence and mystery of the immense Basilica. A religious, neurasthenic person would probably have been carried away to Paradise or to hell.

And these psychical phenomena always reflect the mentality of the epoch. Thinkers may ruminate over the fact that, in all the visions of the Middle Ages, there is blood. Fortunately it was always the blood of Jesus, otherwise these visions would have made criminals instead of saints. In those barbarous days, women, during the time of their gestation, must frequently have seen the streets running with the blood of fratricidal struggles, and this sight must have made

its impression on the fruit of their womb. It was no doubt this which *tinged with red* the soul of the thirteenth century mystics, and which made that soul so cruel to others and to itself. St. Dominic administered discipline to himself and had himself beaten with triple chains of iron, and we may be sure that he experienced a morbid joy on feeling his flesh torn in this way. This makes me think that there is reason in accusing him of having been the inventor of the Inquisition, the predecessor of the famous terrorist, Torquemada. He was a Spanish monk, and under the Spaniard you will find the African fanatic. One feels this on reading the following lines: "Some heretics having been convicted, in Toulouse, were handed over to the secular tribunal, because they refused to return to the faith. Dominic looked at one of them, *with a heart initiated into the secrets of God*, and said to the officers of the court: 'Keep this one apart and do not burn him.' Then, turning towards the heretic *with great gentleness*," (Oh, that *gentleness* so near to the stake!) "he said: 'I know, my son, that you will need a long time, but that you will become good and holy.'" This is rather like a cannibal scene, when the chief of the tribe says to the executors: "Keep this one for to-morrow, he will be better." The unfortunate man was kept — twenty years. That was very kind, in truth. He was converted finally and not burnt.

Vocations which have made great mystics have always declared themselves after an illness. This was the case with St. Francis of Assisi. Unless reason be only a vain word, it is impossible to believe the man

quite sane in his mind who, in the episcopal palace of Assisi, "in the presence of a large assembly, when called upon to return to his father what belonged to him, disappeared into an adjoining room and came back, presently, completely naked, except for a waistband of fur round his loins, carrying under his arm all his clothes, which he deposited, together with a little pile of gold, at his father's feet." Later on, he orders Ruffin, one of his friars, belonging to one of the best families of Assisi, to go, *quite naked*, from the Portioncule to the town and to preach, quite naked, in the Cathedral. He gives a similar order to Brother Ange. He, too, was to go, quite naked, to the town and to announce that the Master would arrive the following day and intended to preach. Twice, during his last illness, he asked to be placed, quite naked, on the naked earth. This is very much like the fancy of a neurasthenic person.

For the last thirty years, whenever people of the lower class see any one doing things, the strangeness of which amazes them, they no longer say that the person is mad but, with a shrug of the shoulders and a note of pity in the voice, they say that this person is *ill*. This explanation is more correct and the son of Pierre Bernardone was "ill."

St. Dominic and St. Francis were enthusiastic about poverty. The latter, who was romantic and also a poet, had the most passionate and childish worship of poverty. How many times I have regretted that cleanliness, divine cleanliness was not the object of his worship for, as the English say: "Cleanliness is next to

godliness." This would have been so much more wholesome, morally and physically! Dirt, though, was to *serve* also.

About the middle of the thirteenth century, there was a curious need of suffering, of poverty and of humiliation in mystic souls. This was, perhaps, intended to serve as a counterpoise to the excessive need of enjoyment, wealth and display which had developed among the upper clergy. And, incredible though it may seem, the creation of the mendicant Orders, feminine and masculine, was inspired by the same irresistible reasons as the heresy of the Albigenses, of the Catharists and of the Vaudois. These reasons were the laxity of all moral discipline in the Catholic Church. These two reactions, similar and diverse, struggled ferociously with each other.

The monks, and the poor women they had sequestered, renounced the transmission of life, in the hope of acquiring imperishable riches. The heretics would not lend themselves to this transmission out of hatred to Life, which they believed to be the devil's work, since they saw it corrupted by those who ought to have purified it. This, too, was an ideal of *sick people.*

Instead of amending its own ways, the Church exercised, over these unfortunate heretics, a more cruel repression than any of the persecutions for which it thought it had earned a crown. The death in the amphitheatre, ordered by the Pagans, was more prompt and more merciful than the death by torture in the dungeons of the Inquisition, invented by Christians — for Christians. The institution of the mendicant Or-

ders was the drag which was put on the Church for a short time, for the sake of stopping it on its march towards the abyss, but it started on again soon and God be thanked for it, as this march was to lead on to the Renaissance and to the Reformation, its salvation and ours too. Catholics who do not think do not look at things in this way, but philosophy does, and *philosophy is always in agreement with Providence.*

St. Catherine of Sienna, born in the middle of all the horrors of civil war, and whose mother was subject to cataleptic fits, was certainly in worse health than any of the other mystics, whose lives I have just been reading. She was above all a *grande amoureuse.* At the age of seven, she imagined that Christ had dictated the following prayer to her: "Oh, most blessed and most holy Virgin, who, *first* among all women, consecrated your virginity to God, and by His grace became the mother of His son, I beseech you very humbly not to look at my misdeeds and at my nothingness. I am a poor creature, but I beg you to do me the great favour of giving me, as a husband, your very dear child Jesus Christ, for I love him and *desire* him with all my heart. I promise you, and promise him too, that I will never have another husband and that I will keep my virginity for him!" This is so childish that one has not even the courage to laugh at it, but one wonders what atavisms could have produced such precocity? After such a prayer, it is not surprising that, at the age of twenty-one, Catherine *saw* the ceremony of her mystic marriage. "In the presence of St. John the Evangelist, of the prophet David, who drew from

the harp strains of infinite sweetness (so that there was even music) Mary, the Mother, took her right hand and gave it to her son. 'I, thy Creator and thy Saviour,' said Christ, putting on the girl's finger a ring that was as strong as the diamond, as pure as the wave and as dazzling as flame, 'I wed thee in the faith; I will protect thy faith from all violation and, armed with this force, thou shalt conquer the world until the day when, in Paradise, thou shalt celebrate with me, thy eternal marriage.'" This was, in truth, the most morganatic of all marriages. Was this story of the apparition an untruth? Not at all. It was merely a phenomenon produced by the imagination. The unfortunate, or the blessed, St. Catherine had entered the "secret garden." She had undoubtedly climbed up the purgatorial road, passed along the illuminative road and the unitive road of initiation. This alarming spiritual gymnastic exercise, the play of theologal forces set in movement by intense desire, might quite well have created within her the *film* of the mystical marriage. She had no doubt believed it to be real, and she had felt the ring, which was only visible to herself, on her finger, "the ring strong as the diamond, as pure as the wave and as dazzling as flame." She saw it disappear, no doubt, when she was tempted to disobey or sin.

In no other saint's visions was there as much blood as in those of St. Catherine, and this, as I have said, was a reflection of the epoch. It was the blood of Jesus Christ, of course, that she saw flowing and she seems to have taken a morbid delight in this. Listen

to this: "One morning at St. Dominic, she approached the Holy Table. Her face, all bathed in tears, was beaming with joy. Accustomed as the Dominican, who was officiating, was to see her in a state of ecstasy, he was surprised. Later on, he questioned her as to the cause of such happiness. 'Have you never seen a mother show the breast to her child, let it cry for it and then give it the food it wanted?' she replied. 'That is just as the Lord was doing with me. After letting my lips nearly touch his side, he moved away, smiling at my tears, and finally he gave me my fill of his blood, making me long to leave all and follow him.'" Is it possible, after reading the Gospel, to believe in the reality of such a vision? Is Christ, who was so simple and so dignified, recognisable in this cruel spouse? Catherine says, too, that she had the sensation of the taste of Christ's blood. This sensation was neither more nor less than *hysteria*. She fed her nuns with bread soaked in this blood — and it vivified them. On her death-bed she wanted bloody sweats. In the thirteenth century, people saw in all this supernatural phenomena. In the twentieth century we can only see pathological phenomena in it all. The gods needed these *sick people* and most of them did remarkable work in the world. St. Catherine of Sienna, the daughter of an uneducated dyer, brought the Western schism to an end, led the Pope back to Rome, made peace between several hostile Republics and took rank herself among the great women of Italy. Her halo of sanctity served as well as an army. These are the things which rouse my admiration, more than any in the world.

St. Theresa came two centuries later, in the very midst of the Renaissance. Very many leaves of the human mind had been turned, and monastic influence was on the wane. She was to be a reformer. It is so true that our cellules contain the germs of our destinies that "her great amusement as a child was to build little monasteries." She played at being a nun just as future society women play at being grand ladies. She had one of the strongest feminine individualities that has ever existed. She was a woman of good family, a poetess, a writer, a thinker, a philosopher, a psychologist, and neither physical suffering nor mysticism could destroy or absorb her magnificent gifts.

She was always a thorough woman and very glad to be admired. She said to Brother Jean de la Misère, when he had just finished her portrait: "May God forgive you, Brother Jean, for having made me so ugly." She loved cleanliness and I expect that she had to exercise much ingenuity in order to combine cleanliness and poverty.

At the age of twenty she had experienced the martyrdom of neurasthenia, which she describes as follows: "My tongue was in shreds, for I had bitten it so much; I felt as though my whole body were out of joint, my head was confused and my nerves so contracted that it seemed to me I was all drawn up into a ball."

With just the same sincerity, she speaks of the phenomena which took place in her soul, and she did what no other mystic has done, she analysed these phenomena with an audacity and an independence which

make these accounts veritable revelations. Psychical science would do well to utilise such documents, as they are more *true* than anything that has been written. It was unwise of her to laugh at the suspicions of the Inquisition, for it might have snapped her up merely for having said that "in the inner world there are certain *natural* movements which are as impossible to stop as those of Heaven." She confesses that it was only with great difficulty that the orison had been possible to her, and the paths of the initiation had been most trying, but she adds that she had been "rewarded by a magnificent salary." She says that she "never saw anything through the eyes of the body." She distinguishes between intellectual visions and *imaginary visions*. She owns that there are imaginary visions. Ah, what a brave saint she was! And as imagination is in our motor, the visions must be there too. In the intellectual visions, she felt that our Lord was there "by a knowledge clearer than the sun." She then goes on to say: "Imaginary visions are of a less elevated order, but, in certain respects, they are more profitable, as they are more in harmony with our nature." Is not that an admirable piece of psychology! In the same way she declares rapture to be superior to ecstasy. "One cannot resist it;" she says, "anticipating every thought and all inner preparation, it swoops down upon you with such sudden impetuosity that you feel the heavenly cloud, or the divine eagle seizing you and carrying you away. . . ."

She had visions of hell too. This was, no doubt, when her poor nerves were strained by the superhuman

effort of the orison. She owns that she endured physical torture; and she adds "but that torture was nothing compared to the agony of soul. This was a grip, an anguish, a complete break-down, so intense that it seems to me in vain to attempt to depict it at all." Some of our neurasthenics of the twentieth century have experienced this sadness "so bitter and so hopeless," that they have been driven by it to suicide.

The "unitive" path was to lead the Carmelite nun of Avila to the mystic marriage, as it had led Catherine of Sienna, but, and this is a detail to note,— each of these marriages reflects the character of the woman; that of St. Catherine, the *grande amoureuse*, and that of St. Theresa, the intellectual woman. The marriage of the latter took place in the following way: "Christ appeared to her *in an imaginary vision*, and, giving her his hand, he said: 'Behold this nail; it is a sign that from this moment, thou art my spouse; my honour will be thine and thy honour mine!'" And those, it seems to me, are the words of the earthly marriage, and particularly of the English marriage. The honour of the Christ-God in the hands of a creature!

St. Theresa conversed constantly with the personages of her dream. She even received messages from Christ for her confessors. Did she really hear voices? I believe she did. A great number of men among Pagans, Hebrews and Christians have heard voices and, as "all things concur," these voices have all *concurred* towards something and, frequently, towards something immense! The voice which stopped St. Paul, on the road to Damascus, gave to the Church an intellect without which

it could not have been organised. Voices have "concurred" in the erection of temples, churches, expiatory monuments; they have put victory on to many scales. The voices heard by Joan of Arc gave France back to its own country. The voices heard by Bernadette Soubirous caused the Lourdes sanctuary to be created. The question is where did all these voices come from? Did they come from the Beyond? No, they certainly did not. Where did they come from then? For a whole week I had this note of interrogation grappling with my thoughts and it was distinctly uncomfortable for me. Then, one morning, in the midst of the not very spiritual *delight* of my early breakfast, which I was taking at my table near the window, in order to enjoy the beauty of an Autumn dawn, I had an inward start.

"Why, our cellules speak!" I exclaimed aloud. For the first time, I had just conceived this magnificent miracle of Nature! They speak, and, touched by the psychical currents which govern them, just as the flower is touched by the sun, they say what they have to say — and nothing else. In certain motors that are all out of order, they chatter wildly and send people mad or neurasthenic. In a state of extreme concentration, they can be heard so distinctly that people believe they are foreign to them. A few days ago, a young composer told me that, the evening before, as he was writing something for the piano, he heard the voice of the violin accompanying it so distinctly that it disturbed him, and he was obliged to interrupt his work in order to break the spell. Was it this fact which, by an occult

association, led me to what I believe to be the truth? This I cannot tell. Scientifically, my idea is, perhaps, not worth a single *maravedi*,* but I would not part with it for a hundred thousand francs. Let others find a better explanation!

St. Theresa was not only devoted to contemplation, she became a reformer and a founder. Towards the age of forty-six — and that age will have some meaning for a medical man — she was freed from those terrible attacks which had made of her physically a suffering captive and, during a curious apostleship, she experienced the joy of action.

No one, as far as I know, has yet attempted to live according to the *spirit* of the Gospel. Very many people, among others the early Christians and the mendicant Orders, have tried to put the *letter* into practice. That letter, which is pure Oriental literature, killed the spirit of their work. St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, by trying to put into practice evangelical poverty, created the desire for wealth in their communities. This was the natural reaction. Beside this, they instituted feminine branches of their Orders. And, as a climax of imprudence, they established, side by side with every convent of monks, a convent of rigidly cloistered nuns. The monks had to beg for these nuns and provide for all their temporal and spiritual needs. These two innocent saints, with a childish ignorance of real human nature, opened up the way finely for his lordship, Satan, whom they spent their days in fighting. And in this way, they sowed

* A very small copper coin formerly used in Spain.

germs of dissolution which increased the scandal caused by the Church. During the lifetime of their founders even, the mendicant Orders were entirely transformed and, towards the close of the thirteenth century, the question of reform was being agitated. In the sixteenth century, the barefooted Carmelite monks were wearing shoes and their garments were of fine cloth. They were to be met on all the roads of Spain, no longer on foot, with their wallets on their backs, but in splendid companies, mounted on richly harnessed mules and followed by carts carrying their provisions — and all the rest to match. It was at this juncture that St. Theresa became a reformer and a founder. "All things concur," even the real or imaginary visions of the mystics. The visions that St. Theresa had of hell inspired her with such terror of the torments she saw reserved for sinners, that she was possessed with the most passionate zeal for their conversion. The reform of the Carmelite Order seemed to be the first thing necessary, and she gave herself up to this, body and soul. She began with the feminine branch of the Order, by way of giving an example, I suppose, to the masculine branch. This was wise and intelligent. With a few nuns, she founded a new convent where the rigid observances of the early days were practised. With the idea of consoling her Saviour, the romantic woman wanted to bring fresh Mary Magdalenes to his feet — and she found them. The gods, for economic reasons no doubt, needed to have a certain number of women taken away from social activity. St. Theresa was, therefore, able to realise the dream of her childhood, for she founded twenty-seven

monasteries. Each foundation must have been a little adventure which gave infinite satisfaction to her mind.

Encouraged by her success, and with the approval of the head of the Order, she now undertook the reform of the masculine branch; she "reformed her confessors and her directors." In our twentieth century, it has not yet occurred to the feminists to reform themselves first — and then to reform the men. St. Theresa understood more about psychology than they do. Her struggle for the re-establishment of the rules which ordered long fasting, a hard life, coarse clothing and bare feet, was both epic and comic, one of Providence's humoristic traits. The Carmelite nun displayed a knowledge of the human soul, a philosophy and a charm which place her in an unequalled position among women and, in spite of the number of her adversaries, among the bare-footed monks, she won the victory. This reform gave St. Theresa a joy which, I am sure, was intense, for it was that of *spiritual maternity*. The Fathers and the Brothers, whose souls she had saved, became her *sons*, her beloved sons, and she experienced the joys of maternity in its most elevated aspects. I am glad of this for her sake.

I discovered an undeniable proof, during this reform, of what I believe to be the truth. The Carmelite nun of Avila, who was a great psychologist, feared agglomerations of those who were to devote themselves to contemplation, more particularly if they were women. She even wrote to her brother: "We must not have more than thirteen in any of our houses." The following is her own account of one of her visions: "In

the midst of the most profound and solemn calm, I heard these words from Our Lord: 'You must tell the barefooted Carmelite Fathers from me that, *in spite of the large number of monasteries, there must be few monks in each.*'" It was then, certainly, the voice of her own cellules that she heard, and not the voice of Christ.

Our neuro-pathologists ought to read the life and letters of St. Theresa. They would find valuable revelations there for science, and more truthful ones than in the confessions of their patients.

In our motor, which we know so little as yet, there are not only cellules which speak, but also cellules which write. The communications which the spiritists receive, come from the frontal lobes and their intermediaries, and not from another world. I guarantee the truth of the following episode. Some years ago, a charming young friend of mine, who lived at Toulouse, was told that she had the eyes of a medium and that she ought to be able to *write*. Very much flattered by this, she took a pencil and a sheet of paper (as it was before the invention of alphabets and planchettes), and concentrated her thoughts, according to the instructions she had received. For three days, she felt nothing except a few nervous movements. Finally, the pencil began to move, tracing first the strokes of the letter *m* and single words without any meaning. Soon complete phrases came and, in strange handwriting, in endless diagonal lines, it gave pages of prose signed "Ariel." Madame X—— was a Huguenot. She read her Bible every day and it is quite possible that she had

been impressed by the name of the idol of the Moabites who, it appears, was a "bad angel." I read a few of her pages and I did not find a single thought which revealed another world than ours. They were most commonplace attempts.

"Ariel" was not long before he exercised an irresistible influence over my young friend. She thought of him as a living personage, and if she had been a mystic, she would, no doubt, have *seen* him. She wrote that she felt perfectly happy and so *light*, so very *light*. When one of the things he announced came to pass, she was in great exultation and she forgot his wrong predictions. He certainly must have been a "bad angel," for he played an abominable trick on her. Her husband had to go to Paris on business, and she remained at Toulouse. One evening, after dinner, she took up the magic pencil and the spirit at once told her that "George had been in bed for forty-eight hours with 40° of fever, that he thought he had gastritis, but that it was a dangerous typhoid fever." She rang the bell for the time-table, had some clothes put into a valise and was able to catch the last train. She adored her husband and, all night long, she had to endure that particularly cruel kind of torture of the soul which wants to fly to some one and feels itself a captive. The following day she reached Paris and, more dead than alive, she arrived in the court-yard of the Grand Hotel. With trembling fingers she paid for her carriage and then, turning round, found herself face to face with George, who was beaming with health. Uttering a cry, she flung her arms round his neck, embraced him fran-

tically and then burst into sobs, in the presence of all the on-lookers, who, at that hour of the day, are numerous. The little scene, related graphically by her husband, made me laugh heartily. He told me that he had had the impression of being suddenly wrapped round by a cyclone. The explanation which followed was somewhat humiliating for the young wife, but her joy at having been mistaken was so great that she put up good-humouredly with all the teasing she had to endure. In spite of this lesson and her promise to her husband to give up "Ariel," it was not long before she took up the magic pencil once more, under the pretext of wanting to know why he had deceived her. He replied that it was to test her, and this idea was evidently her own. After this test, the suggestion became so powerful that the poor woman was alarmed. She went to Paris to consult a great scientist, Dr. Gruby, who was never appreciated as he ought to have been. She told him that she was possessed by a demon and she begged him to try to find her a Catholic priest who would exorcise it. Dr. Gruby smiled and took down, from a shelf of his bookcase, a certain pamphlet which had recently been published. "Read that," he said, "it is a study on auto-suggestion. You will see that you are not possessed. You have set free a hitherto unknown force, that is all. It is you yourself who must exorcise yourself. If I ordered you to stop writing, you could not do it, but you must shorten this fantastical correspondence five minutes every day!" And the doctor, who was a psychologist, in one of his extremely detailed prescriptions, told his patient how she was to

employ every hour of her day. She had so thoroughly felt the danger she was running that she now obeyed religiously and she recovered, but the recovery took her three months.

It seems to me that this phenomenon belongs to the same family as the one that I have just been studying. And now let us look at the wonderfulness of it. "Ariel," that little idol of the Moabites, a very old tribe of Palestine, was a fictitious creation whom the Hebrews had called the "bad angel." It had come from some human cellules, and it now appeared once more in those of a woman of the twentieth century and "served" for making her take a cruel journey from Toulouse to Paris.

My promenade in the "secret garden" of the Roman Catholic Church has rid my mind of a crowd of prejudices, due to my ignorance concerning its mysteries. It has revealed to me a crowd of phenomena about which I am glad to know, because they are a part of Life.

I have been told that if a chalk ring be drawn round a fowl, it becomes so hypnotised by this that it will not go outside the ring, even to eat or drink. It seems to me as though the gods keep those who spend their time in contemplation within a metaphysical ring, formed by the mysteries of religion, and that these people live and die within this circle without knowing anything else of Life and its wonders. Within this circle, mystics elaborate for themselves a more ethereal and more subtle soul than ours. The concentration to which they are doomed produces *films*, visions which they believe belong to the Beyond, and which belong to the Here below, and

very much to the Here below. They are always thinking of their soul, it is their one care in this world. Sin is its mania, and it would seem as though it consoled itself for not being able to transgress by creating for itself the illusion of sin. I know orthodox people who have not taken religious vows who do the same thing. St. Catherine of Sienna had a little detachment of confessors who used to accompany her on her travels. We see from the following lines the character of her sins. "One day, she said to the Father of the Dominicans, 'Ah, how I have offended the Creator. Whilst He, in His goodness, was letting me see St. Dominic, I looked away to see my brother cross the Church!'" The monk, who was probably more sound-minded than his penitent, endeavoured to appease her conscience, but she answered: "If you could only see with what severity the Master whom God has given me, the apostle St. Paul, blames me, you would not be so indulgent for my *sin*. Let me tell you that if I had died without confessing, the happiness of seeing God would not have been granted to me immediately." According to my idea, she deserved to have never seen Him for understanding Him so little. Sin was her mania!

The soul of mystics and of saints generally lacks true grandeur. It is very narrow, childish and selfish. Their faith is so absolute that they transport all that they covet to the Beyond. They want honours, wealth, unperishable things and the *first place*, always the *first place*. That is a sort of celestial prize cup and, in order to win it, they show very earthly avidity. St. Francis even, the gentle mystic of Assisi, who sat down

and ate on the bare ground, longed for a throne. This desire was perhaps created by fatigue. Christ had promised it to him! Giotto gives it to him in one of his frescoes, and I could not help laughing on seeing that it is represented by an arm-chair.

Some heretics said to St. Dominic: "What should you do if we were to take possession of you?" He replied: "I should ask you not to put me to death at one blow, but to tear my limbs off one at a time, in order to lengthen out my martyrdom. I should like to be nothing but a trunk without limbs, to have my eyes torn out, to roll in my own blood (for there is always blood) in order to win a more beautiful martyr's crown."

Mystics neither had perfect love for God, nor for humanity. As for God, they loved Him as the dispenser of heavenly rewards. With regard to humanity, as they were placed themselves on another plane, they were never in communion with it. The charity they exercised was only a means of increasing their own merits. St. Francis of Assisi did not kiss the leper's wounds out of fraternal love, but in order to increase his credit account in the Ledger. That, at any rate, is my impression. The humility of the mystics is a false and unintelligent humility. It is false, because voluntary humiliation and poverty are a glorification. It is unintelligent, because, however low down a man may be in the Universe, he is the earthly masterpiece of the sovereign manufacturer, and it cannot be pleasing to the latter to hear man depreciating himself. God is not an Oriental potentate, who needs the abasement of

his servitor, in order to feel his own greatness. When I was a little girl and, for some reason or another, exclaimed: "How stupid I am!" my mother corrected me, telling me that it was a lack of respect towards my Creator to say such a thing, and she was perfectly right. At bottom, in reality, all that is mere literature.

The mystic soul has now lived out its days of childhood and *malady*. It will evolve like us and with us, it will learn to know God, Life, humanity, and to love them in a more perfect way. Hitherto, it has only scratched at the door of the Beyond, it will learn to knock there in a dignified manner. That door will, perhaps, open to the mystic soul, and it will then have the glory of bringing back the password to Science.

In the flight that I have just made, whilst hovering over the Mystical Garden of the Catholic Church, I was able to surprise the true secret of the attraction that it has had, and that it still has, for numbers of individuals.

There are, in that garden, just as in Eden, God, the demon-serpent, Adam and Eve, all the personages of the symbolical drama. The primordial struggle takes place again there and, circumscribed within the metaphysical plane, it must be an impassioned struggle. Sly Nature has brought the feminine soul and the masculine soul there together and, up above, just as down below, they act on each other. This action, in the mystical regions, produces a love and a friendship which are more intense and more faithful than ours, and also spiritual fraternity and flirtation which must have intense charm. The idea of spiritual *flirtation* will horrify certain persons, but I cannot take back the word,

as the thing exists among the mystics, just as it does among simple mortals. It is the flower, the fruit of which we eat, and I am not sure that it has not more perfume than the fruit. When St. Theresa was a young Carmelite nun, she converted one of her confessors, a man of good family, but not of strict morality. She thought she could prepare him for the love of God, by means of the love that she had awakened in him. Was not this a skilful method? And with that fine frankness, which is my admiration, she says: "If we had not had the thought of God very present, we should have been in danger of offending Him seriously!" In physical flirtation, then, it is, perhaps, the devil who is present.

In the "secret garden," it is by means of the confessional that there is communion between souls, and this communion is the great attraction of the cloister and of the religious life. Without it, these would not have been able to subsist, as the organism would not have been complete. Nowhere else has human communion been more fervent and more profound. Women who would have believed it to be a deadly sin to take off their veil in the presence of a man, even of their own family, bare their souls entirely to the thought of a confessor. They tell him all the phenomena of which that soul is the theatre, they speak to him of the joys and sufferings of the orison, of their struggles with that private enemy whom they call "the demon," an enemy which, in reality, is their own body rebelling against the bad treatment inflicted upon it. Beside all this, directors and penitents tell each other of "God's fa-

vours," that is, of their visions, their raptures, their ecstasies. They start together for great flights. If they should touch earth somewhere, far away from the eyes of the crowd, we must not be surprised or scandalised. What is more grave is the fact that they must frequently have exaggerated and disfigured "God's favours." They must have created false miracles, in order to astonish and interest each other. That wish, common to us all, to interest our fellow-beings, must be still more strong in the case of these creatures who are deprived of all earthly affection and set so strangely apart from the rest of the world.

At the bottom of mysticism, we find many dregs, as we do in all human cups, but on the top of these dregs there is a very pure liqueur. The divine transmuter has drawn wonderful forces from religious neurosis, just in the same way as the precious pearls have been obtained, thanks to the oyster's disease. We cannot help our admiration and our adoration in the face of such marvels.

The "secret garden" of the Roman Catholic Church has given us good and bad fruit. It has furnished Art, Science and Life with the accumulators they needed. Who would want to destroy the Basilica of Assisi, the outcome of the mystic dream of St. Francis? Every intelligent Protestant, every Protestant thinker and artist must envy Catholicism its mysteries and its miracles, barbarous though they may seem to him, for they are its title deeds of antiquity, its letters patent of nobility.

CHAPTER XIV

After having doubled the Cape of Religion and of Mysticism, I expected to find the open sea, and here I am now facing another reef, that of Miracles. I can feel my barque, "The Why," once more tossed by the waves caused by this reef.

What is a miracle? The dictionary defines it as "an act of the Divine Power contrary to the laws of Nature — an extraordinary thing!" Is an act contrary to the laws of Nature, such as the stopping of the course of the stars, or the resurrection of a dead person, possible? These phenomena seem to have never taken place, except in the imagination of the sacred poets: the laws of Nature being the laws of the Eternal God, every phenomenon which contradicts these is only a spiritual mirage. Men only believed in them, thanks to suggestion, and because they needed to believe in them.

With the laws which we do not yet know thoroughly, we can do great wonders. We move about unconsciously, as the fish do in water, in the midst of physical and psychical currents which would annihilate us if we were not *immortal.* That is, in my opinion, the scientific proof of our indestructibility.

Among these currents is that of Suggestion. From very earliest times, the Terrestrian has had to submit to this force, the most formidable one in the Universe, whose projector is the Eternal God — Destiny. We are only just beginning to be aware of it. It produces,

in the soul of the world, waves, tempests, and cyclones, like those of the Ocean. Without even knowing it, we are its receivers and distributors and we exercise it constantly on each other. Wireless telegraphy will help us a little to understand the way in which Nature proceeds. The most insignificant can act on the greatest, and the greatest on the most insignificant. This is the most startling proof of our fraternity. The domestic who brings you your early breakfast may utter a few words which will affect your entire day. The daily letters of a society woman, or of a business man, contain words which will make them act in such and such a way, by touching certain cellules of their motor. And we are all of us suggestionised by thousands of things which are to "concur" with regard to our destinies, by the spirit of the dead as well as by that of the living. And no single suggestion comes to us by chance, for chance could not exist. Every suggestion is a reaction and a radiation. We may not only be suggestionised by others, but we may suggestionise ourselves. In auto-suggestion, the action is not exteriorised, perhaps because the guiding nerve is relaxed; it acts on itself with the cellules of the imagination and the door is then open to all the phobias, to neurasthenia and to its painful extravagancies. The senses even may be influenced by a kind of reflex suggestion. I once happened to sprinkle an orange with salt, instead of sugar. The taste was so disagreeable to me that, for the next three days, my palate was so affected by it that each time I took sugar I fancied it was salt.

The power of suggestion is very strong with those

who are called upon to govern the masses, to group together individuals and to lead them on to some special work.

Doctors are now trying to *canalise* suggestion and use it for the cure of nervous diseases. By means of certain methods which are known to them, they produce hypnotic sleep. This is a great deal certainly, as, during this repose, the human motor, with Nature's help, has some chance of *repairing* itself. These doctors believe, too, that with concentration, and the application of their sound thought, they will be able to restore the right note to diseased cellules. Can they really do this? We must put a note of interrogation there. The science of the future will be able to reply triumphantly to this question, perhaps. In the meantime, we are passing through the period of attempts. What makes me a little doubtful is the number of patients being treated. *To draw* this forceful fluid, suggestion, from one's brain in a continued stream, seems to me difficult, if not impossible. Then, if a miracle is to be worked, there must be two to work it. They can only obtain any result over individuals whose fluids are not refractory to theirs. This seems to me the best proof that there is something in it all.

The hypnotising doctor is a sort of lay-confessor and, like his colleague, the Catholic priest, he is often mistaken. A number of women of the romantic type, in order to win and keep his interest, make him believe that they are influenced by his fluid. Others imagine that he does them good and he believes that he is curing them. This is a phenomenon of mutual auto-sugges-

tion. Will there ever be healers who, thanks to a strong, constant, intelligent suggestion, will be able to act on the conducting wires of cerebral cellules and correct the *defects* of the human motor, just as those of the aeroplane motor are corrected? Such men would certainly be super-men. In order to become a super-man, one must first be a man. Let us then be grateful to those who are trying to make themselves masters of this wonderful force, Suggestion.

Suggestion and auto-suggestion are the principal agents of all the metaphysical miracles, even of that of the stigmata, the only one that it has been given to us to verify. I have been reading over again, in the life of St. Francis, what is called "the great miracle." On the heights of Mount Alverne, one morning in the early dawn, he saw, coming down towards him, a seraph with six shining wings, and upon him was the picture of a crucified man. After staying there some time, the wonderful apparition disappeared, leaving on the body of St. Francis the miraculous traces of the sufferings of Christ, making him look like a living man crucified: "*The heads of the nails were in the palms of his hands and in the upper part of his feet, whilst the points came out on the other side of the hands and feet. Between the flesh and the points of the nails there was room for a finger, just as there is through a ring. And in the same way, on the saint's right side, there was the mark of a lance thrust, like a wound. The blood frequently spurted from this, damping the robe of St. Francis.*"

The phenomenon has never been described in so detailed a manner before. These painful and visible signs

could not have been an illusion for St. Francis and a lie for us. What did it all mean then? For several days this prodigious fact stopped me in my work. I felt that it was true and I could not account for it. One afternoon, as I was turning over the pages of another Life of this Saint, I came to a reproduction of a picture by Gentile da Fabriano, representing the fantastical scene of Mount Alverne just as I had read it. The winged seraph was there; his body was bare and from his right side, from his hands and his feet were the rays which were to stigmatise Saint Francis who was kneeling before him. This engraving fascinated me and, all at once, it seemed to be clear to me. Rays of light! Formerly, this symbol had always seemed most *naïf* and childish, but at present it appeared to me as a revelation, a wonderful intuition of the truth. I uttered an exclamation of joy and I began to pace up and down my room, saying aloud: "I have the key to the miracle!" Could not thought be transmitted by means of luminous rays? Science has taught us that there are rays which burn and consume flesh. Could not an ardent thought, a thought which had become madness, nurtured as it had been for long years by the same image, that of the wounds of Christ, for instance, could it not photograph these wounds, imprint them upon flesh that had been worked upon by nerves and ultra-sensibilised, like that of St. Francis? I believe this could be, I believe this firmly. My idea may appear absurd now, but it may be proved true to-morrow, and I give it now to await that to-morrow which I shall not see.

The larger part of humanity has not only believed in miracles, but it has invented all kinds of miracles, and this proves that it needed them. The walls of Pagan temples, with all their ex-votos, acknowledged the favours received from heaven. Those walls were aflame with faith and gratitude just as our votive chapels now are. The gods which Christians proclaimed false ones performed miracles just as the true God does. I have never heard how the Church explains that, but perhaps it has never been asked for an explanation. This brings me face to face with the burning question: Can we really obtain from God special favours by means of prayers, gifts and sacrifices? The answer yes or no must be given to this question. It seems to me, or at least I hope, that my readers are grown up enough to be able to bear and to understand the "no" which is written so quickly and has been so long thought over. Every single thing is of some consequence in the Universe. The appearance and the disappearance of a flower and of the tiniest insect produce infinite vibrations. The man who asks to be restored to health, or who asks that some one dear to him may be restored to health, has no idea of what the consequences would be. As a matter of fact *man can never know what he is asking.* If the restoration to health which he implores be written in the Divine manuscript, he will obtain it; not because he has asked for it, but because it is necessary to Life. If it be death that Life wants, death will come. We are the Divine work, and this is, for us Terrestrians, the honour which surpasses all honours. We must be in harmony with it.

Does this mean that human prayer is all useless and in vain? Nothing is useless and nothing is in vain. It has another end than the one we see, and that end, we may be sure, is our progress and our future welfare. The proof of this is that all the great religions of the East and of the West have had, and still have, their miraculous sanctuaries, where the crowd of afflicted ones come to implore God. Although these prayers may not be disinterested ones, they bring the creature for an instant to the Divinity and, brief though the contact may be, the creature comes away better and *purified*. In former times, when the spark was more precious than gold, and could only be obtained with great difficulty, there were public altar-fires and people went there to fetch a light, just as they went to the fountains for water. It is my belief that the miraculous sanctuaries are the altar-fires which serve to keep up our faith, hope and love, those admirable forces which help us, poor human beings as we are, to accomplish miracles, for it is man always who goes to the mountain.

There are three sanctuaries where thinkers may study miracles: Lourdes, Valle di Pompeii, at the foot of Vesuvius, and Naples Cathedral, on the first Saturday of May, on the nineteenth of September and on the sixteenth of December.

Lourdes! Formerly it was Salette which cured people. Pilgrimages are still made there, but out of politeness, as it were, for it has been eclipsed by Lourdes, which is now the great miraculous sanctuary of France. The Virgin's favours have moved to another place, as everything does move to another place, even the axis

of our planet. The Pau scenery, with its mountain torrents, is more beautiful than that of the little village of Isère. It is more easy of access and it is within the fashionable zone of the Pyrenees. That does not seem to be of much importance, but it means a great deal. "Everything concurs," the secular things with the spiritual ones, and the spiritual things with the secular ones.

The creation of this sanctuary came about in the most poetical and beautiful way, by means of apparitions of the Virgin. I have just been reading the account of it again, in the *Histoire critique* by Georges Bertrin, an account in which one feels not only the faith of the writer, but the most absolute good faith; two things which one does not often find together. His account, which is well substantiated and very orthodox, nevertheless justifies the ideas which I have given in my preceding pages. This is not the first time that my modernism has come to the same kind of conclusion and this always gives me a delightful sensation of triumph.

I have now before me an excellent portrait of Bernadette Soubirous, the unconscious creator of Lourdes. She looks about sixteen or eighteen and her eyes are the kind of eyes which see visions. If they only used to see things as I see them, I should be very much surprised, for they are bathed in light of a special kind, psychical light, perhaps. She was a delicate, puny girl and just when she was at a critical age, she happened to be out-doors one day, at noon, near a grotto which was covered with wild rose trees, in the Massabielle rocks above the Pau waterfalls. She saw a

beautiful young woman standing at the entrance to this grotto. Bernadette immediately thought it was the Virgin and, kneeling down instinctively, she drew her chaplet from her pocket and began to tell her beads. The description she gave of this unknown person, of whom she caught a glimpse "in a golden cloud," must have been a film produced in her frontal lobes by some lithograph. "She was wearing a white dress," we read, "tied in at the waist by a blue ribbon, the ends of which fell on her dress, nearly to her feet. On her head was a white veil, under which her hair could scarcely be seen. She wore this veil turned back and it fell over her shoulders down to below her waist. Her bare feet were partially covered by the folds of her dress and on each foot was a gold coloured rose. On her right arm was a chaplet of white beads, the gold chain of which shone like the golden rose on her feet."

This *literary* description must have been translated and arranged by some one of the craft, as Bernadette was a backward child. At the age of fourteen she could neither read nor write. She goes on to say: "The Lady let me pray by myself; *she told the beads of her chaplet, but she did not speak.* It was only at the end of each tenth prayer that she joined with me in saying 'Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.'"

If I am not mistaken, this is a little arrangement by some theologian. Theologians are the *spiritual engineers* of religion. Their mission is to watch over the logic of dogmas, so that there may be the necessary cohesion. In reality, Bernadette must have said that

"the Lady was telling her beads," because she herself knew scarcely any other prayers. She was not sufficiently developed to have understood that Mary could not decently have saluted herself and repeated the "Hail Mary!" in her own honour. In St. Dominic's vision, it is the child Jesus who offers him the rosary, but there are pictures which are more *naïfs* and in these, the Virgin offers it herself.

I once heard a catechist asking a little girl of eleven years old one of those stupid questions which are usual: "What was the Virgin doing when the Angel of the Annunciation appeared to her?" The child, who was nevertheless intelligent, answered promptly: "She was kneeling in front of her crucifix praying." None of the other children of the little flock budged on hearing this enormity, and never saw the silliness of it until the priest pointed it out to them.

Bernadette saw eighteen of these apparitions and all this threw her into fits of ecstasy and transfigured her, making her look wonderfully beautiful. One day, "the Lady" gave her this message: "Tell the priests to build a chapel here." Metaphysical people have frequently created centres of prayer in this way. This is not to be regretted, as it is in this way that we have a number of buildings which are valuable artistic accumulators. In another of these trances, the girl heard a voice saying: "Go and drink and wash yourself in that fountain." There was neither fountain nor water there; but, obeying the instructions of the Virgin, she scratched the earth away in a certain place and *water came*. It was not clear, and was even muddy at first,

but it gradually became clear and it increased so much in volume that it became the spring which now feeds "the nine pools for sick people." If the Lourdes sanctuary was necessary, why should Bernadette not have been inspired to look for and to find the miraculous water, just as the poet, the artist or the inventor is inspired to discover sources of psychical emotion, of beauty or of fresh energies? It seems to me the most natural thing in the world and all phenomena are of the same order.

As I have said, visions always reflect something of the epoch in which they take place. The following episode is another proof of this. Three years previously, Pius IX had proclaimed that the Virgin Mary was born immaculate, free from original sin. No dogma, perhaps, had ever met with such resistance or given rise to so much controversy. It was discussed everywhere. Many priests, and very good Catholics too, considered that this was going very far in the metaphysical domain. Europe, and more especially France, had had this on the brain and the echo of it all was still in the air. Bernadette belonged to a pious family and she had heard the question treated in the pulpit and at her catechism lessons. The big words "Immaculate Conception," which she could not understand, must have given her the impression of a mystery. In the duality produced by her ecstasies, she heard those words and she gave them to "the Lady," as she did not know any finer ones to give. It would be interesting to study, philosophically, the way in which Lourdes acquired its celebrity, the way in which it was *launched*. It is not

enough that a spring of water was discovered there. We ought to know how the extraordinary properties of this water were revealed and we ought to have the history of the first miracle. However all that may have come about, this Pyrenees sanctuary has a long list of cures to its credit, and most of them I believe to have been authentic ones.

For a cure to be a miracle, the Faculty of Medicine must have declared that the patient could not recover, and, after going to Lourdes condemned to death, this same person must have been completely cured, leaving his crutches in the grotto and his bandages in the pool.

What doctor has not had the disagreeable surprise of seeing some of his verdicts modified by the gods? Which of them can boast of thoroughly understanding all the mysteries of our spine and of our brain?

I neither believe in spontaneous generation, nor in the instantaneity of things. These things do not exist on our very inferior planet; do they exist elsewhere? I do not know, of course. When a chemist, in the depths of his transmutations, sees some new gas appear, it is because this existed in his generative ampoules. I have just been reading the account of several instantaneous cures which took place at Lourdes. They sound very *real*, but what is instantaneous to us is not so for Nature. It has at its disposition invisible forces, unknown to us as yet, which go on quietly resoldering bones, repairing tissues, setting free marrow that has been compressed by some vertebra, and so preparing what we childishly call "the miracle," a miracle which needed certain psychical agents of Lourdes in order

to be accomplished. Believers attribute instantaneous cures not to the superhuman, as they ought, but to the supernatural, to the immediate intervention of God. Those who set aside the supernatural are scientifically right, as this would be exceeding the power of Nature and that could not be. As to the intervention of God, this is as *natural* as the intervention of solar rays. Those Terrestrians who deny it are infirm, deaf and born blind. We ought to endeavour to cure them by means of logical and common sense arguments.

The people and priests believe in the supernatural, because they know nothing at all about the *natural*. The priests know nothing yet about the planet, animals or man. They therefore speak of God as a blind man would speak of light. They have no idea of the play of our nervous armature, of the existence of the fluids, the currents and the energies which act on us. When medical men suggested that those on whom miracles had been wrought might have been neuropathic, or beings sensibilised to an extreme degree, they protested vehemently, just as if the curing of neuropathic patients were not the most difficult of miracles! It is an almost inconceivable thing that they are still incapable of realising the physical and moral effect which the Lourdes pilgrimage may have on invalids. These invalids belong, as a rule, to the class of provincial people in humble circumstances. For months, and perhaps years, they had been shut up with the microbes, bacilli and bacteria of their respective diseases, within a narrow, badly ventilated space, and sometimes with no sunshine at all. One fine day, the currents of destiny brought

into these hells on earth the name of Lourdes! Lourdes meant to these people health and miracles! Hope acted so powerfully on the poor doomed creatures that they had the courage to start on the necessary journey. All of them have spoken of the joy they felt in breathing fresh air, in seeing, even from the train, in the midst of their suffering, fields and fresh scenery. For the first time, they came out of themselves, as it were, they forgot their own ills in their sympathy with the ills of others, and they must have felt a certain consolation in realising that they were not the only suffering creatures in the world. In these trains which contain so much pain, so much physical ugliness, I am sure there must be waves and waves of wonderful sentiments, of heroism, devotion, faith and love. These psychical forces must have a beneficent action on all these afflicted ones. And then, too, the very fact of being *pilgrims* makes them each feel that they are *some one* for the first time, perhaps, in their lives. At Lourdes, they find arms to carry them, gentle hands to dress their wounds, and kind, consoling words. The men and women who are to tend them see in each sick person the possibility of a miracle and treat them, at once as elect. Then come the immersions in the pool. The shock must be such for the whole organism that it may cause certain contractions, and even paralysis, to disappear. There are also the spiritual emotions of the various religious ceremonies. These, in themselves, are so touching that the eyes of simple spectators are apt to fill with tears. And all these things "work together" towards cures. If radiations exist in our motor powerful

enough for producing instantaneity, we may be sure that these radiations are natural. In the Middle Ages, the gramophone, the voice without the man, and the cinematograph would have been considered the devil's work, and the inventors would have been condemned to torture and to death. Our grandmothers even would have considered such things supernatural. What is still to us a miracle, an *impossible thing*, will be for our descendants, two generations later, as *natural* as wireless telegraphy.

These pilgrimages must do good to people, even when they are not cured. Among Christians, a Lourdes pilgrim has as much prestige as the pilgrim of Mecca among the Mussulmans, and this religious feeling probably puts into activity germs of progress which will bear flower and fruit in future life.

A few days ago, I saw one of my young Protestant friends who had just returned from Lourdes. He had been very deeply impressed by that special atmosphere created by the concentrated faith of an important pilgrimage and by the words repeated in chorus by hundreds of voices: "Heal our dear suffering ones!" The French words: "Guérissez nos chers malades," sounded to him like "Guérissez nos *chairs* malades." His artistic mind had been struck by the psychical beauty of the ceremony and he had been greatly astonished to see people of a certain class bow down and kiss the ground. I can quite understand that they should, as it is an Oriental gesture. With a shade of regret, after describing all this to me, he said: "Protestantism will never work miracles." "No," I answered,

"the Roman Catholic Church would tell you that, as this gift was bestowed upon it by Christ, it has remained with it alone." That is merely religious literature, though. The miracle came from the East, from the very heart of the sanctuaries of India, and the Reformation, born later on and essentially Western and intellectual, rejected it. The Reformation was, as I have said, the *stabiliser* of the human mind. Its religion is simple and strong, much stronger than ours, but it has no imagination, no symbols, and it does not produce enough spiritual warmth to engender the "miracle." The walls of its temple are, I believe, the only ones without ex-votos. That does not matter in the least, as millions of its adherents live very well without all this. It would be terrible if we had Catholic miracles and Protestant miracles. May God preserve us from that!

What touched my young friend more than anything else at Lourdes was the work of the stretcher-bearers. These men do not choose their invalids. They go to the hotels and hospitals and ask simply if there is any one for the waters. And the individual they carry away, with such evident kindliness and with a sort of respect, is frequently a mere human wreck. My friend was very much surprised to meet, in the restaurant of one of the Biarritz hotels, one of these gentleman stretcher-bearers, wearing a flower in his button-hole, his hat tilted on the back of his head and accompanied by a *demi-mondaine*. This was a trifle disconcerting to my Calvinistic friend, who was not accustomed to these sudden moral *leaps*, so frequent with Catholics.

The romantic element in the episode appealed to him, though, and won his admiration. I explained to him that the young man was probably some spoiled child of his mother, who had been educated by the Jesuits and was at Lourdes taking a conscience cure, and, according to my way of thinking, an act of true humanity may redeem a multitude of transgressions.

Thanks to a sort of prescience, perhaps, I have always been curious to know the impressions produced on people by Lourdes. I have questioned numbers of persons of different nationality, religion and social standing. This impression was generally a good one during the pilgrimage season, but, during the dead season, the impression was distinctly unfavourable. The stage is then empty, there is nothing left but the beautiful natural scenery of the background, whilst all the tricks and ropes of the commercial exploitation are visible. On the signs of certain shops, the owner's name is given with the addition: "uncle (or cousin) of Bernadette Soubirous." I have heard very ardent Catholics rejoicing that the Church does not insist on the belief in Lourdes. The "White Fathers," I feel sure, have instituted excellent charitable works with the "miracle money," but they use a great deal of it to embellish the Pyrenees sanctuary, in a very modern manner, for the sake of attracting tourists. These embellishments are always sanctified by means of a cross, or a symbol of some kind, and so *the face is saved.* But do not let us cavil about all this. Lourdes has cured people and it will probably continue to cure people for a long time yet. Since it exists, it is necessary to Life. If I

should learn, to-morrow, that it was all a colossal fraud, I should not be at all scandalised, but should begin at once to study the miracle of *illusionism.*

The miraculous sanctuary of Valle di Pompeii! There was no Bernadette Soubirous there, and there were no apparitions! A mere lawyer was the intermediary and this is certainly rather extraordinary. I heard about this religious centre in a rather curious way. I had been to Pompeii a quarter of a century ago and, one fine day, I was led back there. I found it as changed as a dead city could be. It was entirely cleared and better kept than Naples, the living city. The cleanness of its streets, the restoration of certain of its houses made the catastrophe seem more recent and more touching. On reaching the ancient amphitheatre, I stood on a part of the wall, in order to take a look down and endeavour to discover something of the soul of the ill-fated valley. My eyes were now older, but they could see things better, and I uttered an exclamation of surprise on perceiving, against the horizon, a dome which appeared to me immense and which was ablaze with gold in the sunshine.

"What is that?" I asked my cicerone. "I do not remember ever having seen a church there."

"It used not to exist," I was told. "It is the sanctuary of the Virgin of the Rosary. Five millions were spent on it, and its treasury of jewels and valuable objects is estimated at four millions."

"I should never have thought there was enough faith in Italy for that," I remarked.

"Oh, we are not silly enough (*tanto minchioni*) to

spend so much on miracles," answered my guide, with that Neapolitan smile which is so expressive of sly philosophy. "The money has come from France, Belgium, Austria and South America."

"And who founded this sanctuary?" I asked.

"A lawyer."

"A lawyer!" I repeated, in amazement.

"Yes, Signora, a certain Bartolo Longo. It is he who founded everything and contrived everything, together with the Madonna."

I could not help smiling at the thought of this lawyer *contriving* with the Madonna. One has to go to Naples to hear such an expression and it is well worth the journey.

"Thirty years ago," continued my guide, "the valley of Pompeii was almost deserted. It was only inhabited by peasants who were half wild and who had to protect themselves from brigands and wizards. At present it has four thousand inhabitants, a railway station, a police station, an observatory for keeping watch on *that*," continued my guide, pointing to Vesuvius. "It has an orphanage, too, and an Institution for the children of prisoners."

"For the children of prisoners!" I exclaimed. "What a beautiful idea!"

"Yes, very beautiful . . . *assai bella.*"

"Your Virgin of the Holy Rosary must have performed many miracles?"

"Yes, they say she has. She cured people who could obtain nothing from Lourdes. No one knows why (*non si sa perché*)! There is one miracle, though, that she

has not been able to perform, and that is to make the priests and monks agree. They quarrel about the money that is given and the lawyer, too, wants his share for the Orphanage. Folks are all living like cats and dogs in the country round. Some of them are for the priests, others for the monks and others again for Bartolo Longo."

"And whose side do you take?" I asked.

"The lawyer's. Folks chatter (*ciarlono*) but things speak for themselves. The things of Valle di Pompeii show what he has done. If he has worked for himself, he has worked for a great many families as well. All the intriguers (*facondieri*) cannot say as much for themselves."

This conversation made me want to know more. I felt that there was some romance hidden here. This extraordinary lawyer interested me, because he had thought of the children of the prisoners, and there are so many prisoners in Naples. I made enquiries on all sides, but met with either sullen hostility, or with absolute indifference. The idea of the miracles prevented all unbelievers from putting their trust in Bartolo Longo's good faith, whilst the attention that was paid to the material side spoilt everything for the believers. At that time in my life I was not interested in sanctuaries and I had no idea that I ever should be interested in them. I came away without visiting Valle di Pompeii, but the guide's conversation did its little occult work. When I was back in Rome, I met a woman of the best Neapolitan society at a reception given by the sculptor Ezechiel. I talked to her about Valle di Pom-

peii and my curiosity concerning it. She made things clear to me at once and, for my further edification, sent me the history of the sanctuary written by its founder.

This history is a valuable document for the thinker who is interested in the weaving of this world's events. It is scrupulously truthful and of such childish *naïveté* that it lets us see the play of Life in all this, and even the *wires* by which everything is worked. With the most unconscious determinism, Bartolo Longo believed himself to be led, and absolutely inspired, by a divine power which I should call Providence, the gods, Nature, God, and which he believed to be "The Virgin of the Rosary." This personage of the metaphysical dream was no doubt in harmony with his mentality. He had to believe in her, as he was to found an important work, and he was a weak man.

Italian lawyers are, as a rule, curious specimens and are unlike those of any other country, but Bartolo Longo's originality was of a rare and supreme kind, for he was a mystic, and belonged to the Tertian Order of St. Dominic. He was a religious neurasthenic and monomaniac who believed himself in danger of damnation. He had married Countess Fusco and, thanks to a kind of snobbism, he always speaks of her as "The Countess." She owned a house and some land at Valle di Pompeii. He used to go there from time to time, and this desolate spot, near the ruins of the Roman *Terrienniere*, seemed very little calculated to cure his melancholy. It was there, nevertheless, that he was to find his "Damascus road." That, it appears to me, was the first of those extraordinary acts which Nature

was to work in him, and by means of him, and which he called by the name of "miracle."

One day, when strolling along in a wood named Arpaja, believed to be still inhabited by the Harpies, he was seized with one of those fits of religious despair when he believed himself to be the victim chosen by Satan. The following is his account, told in his own words: "Suddenly," he says, "I stopped short. I felt suffocated and thought my heart must burst. In the midst of my distress, I heard a voice murmur in my ear words which I had read myself and which a dead friend of mine had often repeated to me: 'If thou art seeking thy salvation, propagate the Rosary. The promise of Mary is that "whosoever shall propagate the Rosary shall be saved!"' These words were like a flash of lightning which cleared away the gloom for me. I looked up, stretched out my hands towards heaven and cried out, addressing the Virgin: 'If it be true that thou hast promised St. Dominic that whosoever shall propagate the Rosary shall be saved, then I shall be saved, for I will not leave this Pompeii district before instituting the Rosary here.' A distant bell rang out the midday Angelus. I bowed down and repeated the prayer which thousands of faithful hearts were then offering to Mary."

Oh, Nature, divine force, what things you have put, in germ, into this little incident! After six centuries, St. Dominic's dream was to *serve*, in order to create a fresh centre of spiritual life in the valley of Vesuvius, opposite that Mount Gauro, where legend places the apparition of the Archangel St. Michael. We see,

therefore, that nothing is lost, neither thoughts nor even dreams. They remain in the soul of the Earth, in order to produce other thoughts — other dreams.

Bartolo Longo believed that he had found the way to escape damnation and he did not intend to let this opportunity slip. "Whosoever shall propagate the Rosary shall be saved." These words were the life-buoy which Providence threw out to prevent him from foundering in madness. He seized it, clung to it and, for the next thirty years, it kept him afloat and enabled him to accomplish truly extraordinary things. I do not know whether his story is translated, but I should like all my readers who *think* to be able to read it.

To institute the Rosary in the homes of uneducated peasants, who scarcely knew the "Hail Mary" even, who neither had a crucifix, religious pictures nor symbols in their wretched dwellings, was not an easy thing. Bartolo Longo began by distributing medals and chaplets. These were accepted rather for the sake of their metal mounts than for their spiritual value. He then went from cottage to cottage repeating: "Whosoever shall propagate the Rosary is saved." The promise of salvation on such cheap terms did not fail to make an impression on some minds. The Valle di Pompeii Church was, all that time, a kind of dirty shed, all cracked and likely to fall into ruins. He put up, in this church, a little lithograph of the Virgin of the Rosary, which he had had over his own bed. The people he gathered round it, for the reciting of the chaplet, were, I expect, chiefly old women and children. That did not matter, the little nucleus was formed. He then

remembered that these peasants, barbarous as they still were, had an innate tenderness for their dead. They did not like having their friends buried without being accompanied to the grave by a religious procession, as in the neighbouring villages. The lawyer, thereupon, had the brilliant idea of establishing a religious association, the members of which should render this homage to any of their fellow members who died. This little association was really the first layer of stones of the Valle di Pompeii temple. The little picture of the Madonna was replaced by one which cost as much as three francs. It represented the Virgin giving the chaplet to St. Rosa and the child Jesus to St. Dominic. It appears that these three metaphysical persons were hideous. This picture, which was to be exhibited for the veneration of the faithful, arrived the evening before a festival which had been announced by loud trumpet blasts. It arrived by the messenger cart and on the top of some manure which the man happened to be transporting that day. Oh, Providence, what an adorable romancer you are!

In this valley, which had hitherto been so forsaken and where all gaiety was unknown, there were from henceforth fêtes, fireworks and music. Then came missionaries and, in the religious world, there was something quite new: "The Virgin of the Rosary Society." A church was needed in connection with the Society and a subscription was opened. The amount of this subscription was a halfpenny a month. Bartolo Longo's wife, "the Countess," also belonged to the Tertian Order of St. Dominic. She was full of en-

thusiasm for her husband's dream, and all the more so as she had been born at Valle di Pompeii and had inherited land there from her family. She soon interested Neapolitan society in the idea, and pious gifts began to flow in. Then came the consecration and, after this, the Virgin of the Rosary performed her first miracle. The following is the miracle in all its *naïveté:* A young girl of Naples, Clorinda Lucarelli, at the critical age of twelve, was troubled with epileptic fits. She was an orphan and was being brought up by an aunt who adored her. The most celebrated doctors had declared her to be incurable, as they always do patients of this kind. The Lourdes image, at San Nicolà di Tolentino, had been deaf to all prayers. On the 3rd of February, the poor child writhed in convulsions from morning to night and then from night to morning again. She was quite unconscious and it seemed probable that she would not recover. "The Countess" paid a visit to Madame Lucarelli that day, and spoke to her of the subject which interested her beyond anything else, the Pompeii work. Madame Lucarelli immediately felt a ray of hope within her, and this was the first phase of the phenomenon. She promised, spontaneously, that, if the Virgin of the Rosary cured her niece, she herself would set off to beg for the new church. This was the second phase. On the 13th of February, the day when the restored image of the holy Rosary was exhibited on the altar, Clorinda was cured. This was the third phase and the image was proclaimed to be miraculous. It is only the first miracle which costs anything and, suggestion doing its work, others fol-

lowed. The subscription of one halfpenny a month was swallowed up in the stream of offerings which now came in, and it was not a modest church, but a veritable temple which rose from the earth. The various architectural difficulties are quite epic and also the successive restoration of the miraculous image and the transformation of St. Rosa into St. Catherine of Sienna. Bartolo Longo is not in the least afraid of disenchanting his readers. He tells all this with an artlessness which is both comic and most refreshing.

It seems as though some of the personages of the metaphysical dream are destined to be more renowned than others. The Madonna of Pompeii very soon began to draw pilgrims and her sanctuary acquired wealth in the most extraordinary way. The founder of all this describes the splendour of the miraculous image with childish pride. The sanctuary had become a casket of precious stones. Without any offence to the worthy lawyer, it seems to me that all this was in the worst taste, as Catholic symbols always are in Naples. I cannot forgive myself for not having seen the pearl which adorns the right ear of the Immaculate Virgin, and the sandal of her left foot, which was set with gems. This feminine taste for jewellery which the Virgin was supposed to have is very curious.

The work to which Bartolo Longo devoted thirty years developed in a way that was beyond all his conceptions. In an address to those whom he calls his "sisters and brothers," he says, not without some bitterness, that, the Pope, having asked him to cede the temple of Valle di Pompeii to the Holy See, he has done

this *as a blindly obedient Christian*, thus renouncing all rights over the sanctuary which he had hitherto possessed, thanks to the "apostolic briefs of Louis XIII." Further on, he tells us how the miracle money had been employed. "Without any fixed income," he says, "without any grant either from the municipality or the ministry, we spend from ten to fifteen thousand francs a week, we help more than four hundred families, we give work to hundreds of artisans and others, we provide for a hundred and thirty-five orphans and a hundred sons of prisoners. On Saturdays, not one half-penny remains in our cash-box, and the following Saturday money is there again to pay for everything. Does not this show that Providence exists?" Certainly it does. Providence *is* since we are.

Bartolo Longo, like millions of individuals, had never observed the play of Life, the play which consists in drawing the greatest from the smallest at the cost of continual effort and struggle. When he saw what had come out of his poor, empty hands, he gives us, in all good faith, his work as an irrefutable proof of the *supernatural*. It is, on the contrary, *naturalissima*, in perfect harmony with the laws that we know, but, like all the works of Terrestrians, it was not his work — but that of the gods — and that again is natural.

I regret immensely that I did not pay a visit to the Western sanctuary and to its founder. At all events, a very beautiful *film* of it has remained in my brain, the one taken from the amphitheatre of the *Terriennière* in ruins, that of the valley bounded on the north by Vesuvius, on the south by Mount Gauro, a valley of

infinite sadness, bathed in the light of Dante's dreams. In the horizon, a dome emerges, a new dazzling looking dome which throws out a beam of fresh life. When I see this *film* again, at the back of my forehead, or when I see material and spiritual force face to face, it seems to me that I hear a dialogue between the implacable volcano and the little sanctuary.

"I can destroy you, some day," says the volcano.

"You can change my face, but you cannot destroy me," answers the little sanctuary, "as I am a fragment of Him who created you. When you have devastated me, my stones will speak, like those of Pompeii, my elder sister, and we shall always be the dead who live."

In all sanctuaries, those of the East and those of the West, a whole crowd of reprehensible and unworthy acts take place. For instance, the Turks are obliged to prevent Christians from killing each other around Christ's tomb. We must neither be surprised nor scandalised at this. It is the fermentation taking place there, just as it does in the vats at the time of the vintage, and Life will always come out of this more purified.

There is a metaphysical circle, as it were, around Vesuvius, and this is most curious. On Mount Gauro, there was the apparition of St. Michael; at Valle di Pompeii there were the miracles wrought by the Virgin of the Rosary; at Naples itself, we have the liquefaction of St. Janvier's blood. Was all this faith engendered by fear? That is quite possible.

St. Janvier was one of Diocletian's martyrs. Years later, under Constantine, his body was brought back to

Naples. His blood, it appeared, was still living and it liquefied. God alone knows how this miracle was brought about by the makers of legends, but it was taken as a visible sign of the protection accorded by the Saint to the city which was so dangerously situated. Like Vesuvius, it remains in activity and is, I believe, the only Christian miracle which still takes place. In the twentieth century it meets with the same credulity as it did in the sixth! Fear is a great generator of faith.

One day, I was present at this great mystery in the Naples Cathedral. I felt the atmosphere charged with a special kind of electricity and I was terrified at the expression of the crowd. The people's eyes seemed to be starting out of their sockets, their faces were streaming with perspiration and tears. Some of the faces were very beautiful, others hideous. Their lips seemed ready for prayer or for blasphemy. There is no doubt that if the hope of this crowd had been deceived, St. Janvier and his priests would have had a bad moment. When the people have finally left their childhood behind them, when they can look their enemies and truth in the face, in a philosophical way, the shrine will give up its secret, and we shall know the name of that composition which becomes liquefied, not by means of prayers, but by the heat of the ambient air and by the gesture of the benediction repeated, as it is, over and over again. In the meantime, blessed be he who invented this wonder, since it was to serve in comforting thousands of human creatures. The real miracle is the miracle itself — the more false it is the more true is it that this

one, like all the others, has helped forward and is helping forward Life.

And on the screen of my mind an old memory comes back, something which made a great impression on me, an impression that has never been effaced. Many years ago, in Italy, I used to visit a girl of humble class, whom I had known when she was very beautiful, healthy and extremely coquettish. She was now suffering from a horrible complaint, the marrow of her bones was diseased. With ever increasing sorrow and stupid, unjust anger, I watched, without understanding it, Nature's work of destruction on this poor girl. It was slower and more cruel than I can possibly describe. One afternoon, I found her mother, and an aunt who was helping to nurse her, with their eyes swollen with weeping. They told me that the last sacrament had just been administered. I had a pang at my heart when I saw the chest of drawers covered with a little white cloth, on which had been placed two bright candlesticks containing some wretched little wax tapers and a crucifix. The room was full of that faint, warm odour, a mystic odour, which the priest brings with him and leaves with the dying. Assunta, or what remained of her, was dozing. She was a mere skeleton, but a beautiful skeleton. Her magnificent hair had been cut off, as every day her head was covered with vermin. Her short hair, of a reddish brown colour, looked like a halo round her thin face. An invisible hand had hollowed the temples and brow, chiselled the nostrils, made the ears and lips thinner and taken from them their colour, but this same hand had, like a true Artist, respected the

beautiful, classical lines of the features. She looked like an angel such as the Primitives loved to paint. The room was very large and hygienically bare. There were two windows opening on to an old garden, from which came the twittering of spring-time and air that was laden with sap and with the scent of the acacia trees. I had managed to seat myself without disturbing the invalid. Presently she opened her eyes and, to my great surprise, I saw that she was smiling. After thanking me prettily for the oranges which it was my delight to take her, as she enjoyed them up to the very last, she said:

"*Sa* — *signora* — do you know that I have made a vow to the Madonna to-day?"

"Really?" I answered.

"Yes, I see that I must die, but when they are putting me in the ground, supposing that she brought me to life again! She could do this, could she not?"

I was so much taken aback, that I could find no words, and so I only nodded.

"Well, I have promised her that, if she will perform this miracle, I will wear black all the rest of my life and that I will never dance again, never again!"

The poor girl uttered these words as though she were making an immense sacrifice.

I understood then why the priests let people believe in miracles and I, myself, found some lying words with which to encourage this faith that seemed to me sacred.

Assunta died the following morning "like a light that was blown out," said her mother to me.

"It was God that blew on her," I added.

"*No, Signora* — it is the devil who takes children from their poor mothers. God takes them away from him though and puts them in His Paradise — and so punishes the devil."

According to the girl's wish, it was her *fiancé* who placed her in her coffin. With his voice full of tears, he told me that "her bones sounded like dry wood," and then he murmured very tenderly, "blessed bones." In Italy, love sometimes makes a poet out of a man of the people.

It is the faith in miracles which creates hope stronger than death, and which had put into the dying girl's eyes that ray of joy which I shall never forget and which I can see now. Do not let us despise it for it serves to create the "state of grace" for the humble of this world.

Our descendants will laugh at the ignorance of our childhood, but their adult age has been borne along by our childhood and their path prepared by it. I hope that their thinkers may recognise that. The old beliefs begin to tickle the humour of the present generation. I have just come across two Christmas cards which are irresistibly droll and very characteristic. They did not come from frivolous, disrespectful France, but from the country of the Bible. They were from England and from America and, I must own, that this rather surprised me. On one of the cards is a huge apple that has been bitten. The teeth marks of Adam and Eve are visible. Underneath is written: "The cause of it all." I laughed heartily as I looked at it and then I said aloud: "Heaven be thanked for that

bite, as our hope is the result of it." The other card is more amusing still. It is a very fine lithograph, representing neither more nor less than the earthly Paradise. In the background, between the peaks of the mountains, there is a warm sun just turning red. Below the sun is a background of mysterious and distant mist. In the foreground are flowers with long stalks and two tall palm-trees, between which a rope is stretched. On this rope, fastened with big thorns, two pathetic, different sized vine-leaves are hanging. We learn from the words below the picture that it is "The first washing day." It is extremely comic and not in the least coarse. I put this characteristic lithograph up on the wall over my dressing-table. On looking at it, I always feel a certain amusement, mingled with a little melancholy, as it already gives such an impression of the past! . . .

CHAPTER XV

I HAVE not yet finished with psychical phenomena, at least with those which are known to us. There remains the most astonishing of them all — prayer. Ah, how I should like to be able to skip this subject, but if I did so, it would keep coming back to my mind until the end of my volume and would disturb my thoughts in a wicked way. The most uncomfortable of things is a dissatisfied conscience.

Communication between the Creator and the creature is no illusion. It must have been set up with our first breath; it has never been cut off and it never will be. At a given moment it produced prayer. Prayer is the outcome of the fear which inspires it. One day, the ancestor with low, receding forehead, and oh, how low it still was, felt, in the midst of some cataclysm, that sudden, mysterious emotion which we call fear. He thought he saw masters and enemies in each of the forces of Nature, in the torrent which carried away great pieces of his sloping banks, in the ocean, which advanced in a threatening way and then withdrew again, in the voices of the forest, in the thunder which split the giant trees, and in the bolide which fell from heaven. And how could he have thought that forces which had movement and life were not animated? He bent his knee before them, in order to make himself appear smaller, and to excite in them the pity which he had, perhaps, felt for some captive. Hoping to appease

their anger, he offered them the best of his plunder, after his hunting and fishing expeditions, or human victims. That first offering was, no doubt, the first prayer.

And days and years passed over the Terrestrian. There came a time when his more developed soul experienced spiritual grief. This may have been due to the loss of a being dear to him and, at the same time, he was suddenly aware of the Higher Presence. He raised his eyes heavenwards, because, I suppose, the loud voice of the thunder seemed to come from there; the cloud was there which brought with it the destructive hail and the sun, too, shone there. And to that heaven where, later on, he was to place his gods, in that direction towards which so many eyes were to be turned, he uttered his cry of distress. Man had come out of himself; his mind, instead of crawling, had soared above his cavern or hut. His prayer had, perhaps, been nothing but a beating of wings. That is of little matter; the wings were there and spiritual aviation was discovered. Under the action of metaphysical force his prayer increased and became more noble, its waves developed into sacred poetry and sacred music. These waves now form a wide river, full of impurities as yet, but which will gradually get purified as it approaches the Ocean of Life into which it is to pour itself. Is this really the way in which the gods worked in the Wonderful Romance? I hope so, for their own sake and for mine. However that may be, the child-Terrestrian, judging the Divinity by himself, continued offering bloody sacrifices with his prayers, in the hope of winning favour.

In the days of human sacrifices, I fancy it was some cannibal theologian who started the idea that the will of the gods could be known by the arrangement of the internal organs of the victims. When the priests had read the intestines, the lungs, the liver and the heart were burnt on the altar, but the flesh was distributed to those present, sold for the benefit of the *temples*, and *given over to the priests* who sold it. These bloody sacrifices made the altars seem like the benches of a butcher's shop and the Pontiffs like butchers. The cake of pure flour, which was offered to certain gods, was the precursor of the consecrated bread of Christian communities. This came in its own good time, as all things do, and it was the sin-money and the miracle-money which supplied the funds for the new worship.

The gifts offered up, in self-interest, by the Terrestrian to the Master of the Universe, had always appeared to me grotesque. One day, though, I happened to witness a little scene between two young lads which made me see the sacrifices in another light, a light which I now believe to be the true one. The bigger boy had a wretched looking pocket-knife which the smaller boy evidently coveted. He thought, no doubt, that it would be a fine thing to own a knife which shut up.

"Give it me," he said, "and you shall have all that I have in my pockets."

"Let's see what's in your pockets," replied the other one.

The child spread out all his possessions, somewhat reluctantly, on a low wall. They consisted of a ball of string, three marbles and a few playing cards. By a

rapid association of ideas, I saw, in this little scene, the gesture of man face to face with God. The candour and the poverty which it revealed seemed to me so pathetic and so touching that my eyes were misty with tears. The owner of the knife refused the exchange. I was tempted to buy a knife for the disappointed little fellow, but refrained from doing so lest he should hurt himself with it. Providence often acts like this with us perhaps.

The Roman Catholic Catechism gives an admirable definition of prayer. It tells us that it is " an elevation of our soul towards God." And this is the phenomenon. It is this invisible force which snatches man away from his cares and material preoccupations and transports him to the metaphysical plane of the earth, in order to give him a moment's repose, oblivion and change. The repetition, even though it may be mechanical, of words that are not understood is beneficent and refreshing. This force acts on man in various degrees and in a thousand different ways, by means of religion, words, pictures, symbols, grief, or by a desire for some good. Alone, the Terrestrian could never make the start, and even now his flights are only very insignificant ones. They never go beyond the zone where the personages of his spiritual dream are. He very rarely reaches the highest peak of Olympus. There are thousands of creatures who never kneel, who frequent no church and who do not pray, creatures who are frequently very superior, as regards intellect and morality. Do they just miss this attractive, metaphysical force? No, but they are destined for more active service than that of

prayer, and prayer is not necessary to them. From time to time, nevertheless, in the midst of their occupations, from across the gulf which seems to separate them from all religious ideal, their thoughts are attracted by the Beyond, by God, and they wonder what He is, what He is like and where He is. They come into contact with Him in this way. They feel that He exists and that is enough. Atheism must be an illusion and the atheist an impossibility. He would be an individual upon whom none of the forces of Nature would act and who could not have been created. That people should not believe in the God made by man, I can understand and I do not believe in such a God myself, but that people should not believe in the God who made man seems to me an aberration.

The housemaid on my floor of the hotel is German. She comes from Posen, I believe. She has a mind which is naturally objective and this gives her the most astonishing philosophical intuition. "I do not talk to people who say there is no God," she remarked to me, the other day, "nor to those who think their own religion is the only one that is good, as they are too stupid for me."

"Olga," I said, laughing, "you are the first philosophical maid I have had."

"What is philosophy?" she asked. "I have heard that word several times and I do not know what it means."

"Wisdom," I replied.

"Ah," she said simply, continuing her dusting energetically.

The people of the working-class, with their admirable

common-sense, say that "those who work are praying," and they are once more right, for all work, even that of the most humble and abject kind, means communion with the author of Life.

One day, I felt curious to see the faces of religious people, when they were praying together. The Church of St. Roch of Paris was an excellent post of observation for me. The sight was so interesting and so full of revelations, that I have since been to a number of churches of different faiths for the same purpose.

The effect of all these rows of faces, so alike and yet so different, was ugly and almost comic. One must have seen a great many faces of white people together to realise how many different shades they may be: dull white, pinky white, grey white, yellowish and greenish white. Their expressions of piety were still more varied. Some of these expressions were veritable grimaces of the most apparent falseness, and others were beautiful and pathetic. Some were looking down and others looking upwards. There were lips that were moving mechanically, whilst the eyes would be glancing here and there, taking in impressions which did not seem to be religious ones. Some of the hands held books, others told beads, and others were clasped as though in supplication. The young men present seemed to be looking on at some spectacle, the older men alone were praying with a certain dignity. And all this was supposed to be an elevation of the soul towards God! Ah, no, I did not have that sensation for an instant. I had a very clear impression of a *halt* in life's rush, of an enforced rest which would teach children *to keep still.*

As a matter of fact, all tongues were bridled for a moment and a damper put on to all turbulent brain cells. The solemn waves from the organ, coming and going over the heads of the congregation like a benediction, the voice of the priest, the words of the rite created an atmosphere which was infinitely soothing. The idea then came to my mind that, just as there are military exercises for training man for the struggle, for heroism and for patriotism, so there are religious exercises for training him in concentration, spiritual life and the love of God. The church service is only a preparation for prayer. It is not prayer itself. In Protestant churches, the religious exercise is performed in a more simple and severe way. The expression of people's faces there is uniform and conventional. The Mussulman's prayer is strangely touching in its manliness. At certain moments it seems to draw down, into the Mosque, the Presence of God. True prayer is a communion. It could not be only individual. I may add that I have seen the phenomenon, that I have seen it as far as human eyes can see the Invisible. This was three years ago, in Italy, when visiting the Cathedral of Spello, a small town in religious Umbria. I was just passing by one of the dimly, but artistically, lighted chapels, when two magnificent dark eyes riveted on a picture of the Virgin brought me to a standstill. They were the eyes of a man of about fifty years of age. His hair was turning grey and his face was emaciated, either by illness or grief. He was some little distance from the altar, with one knee only on the praying-chair and the other leg seemed to be stiff. His lips moved

slowly, like lips which know what they are saying. I wondered for whom he was praying so ardently. The impassibility of the Madonna caused me the most childish irritation. It seemed to me that she ought to have been touched by this earnestness. I felt the sensation of prayer to such a degree that, in order not to interrupt the waves of it, I passed along, with muffled tread, at the back of the unknown man. If I had then been writing my chapters on mysticism, I should have fancied that it was a case of auto-suggestion, but I had not even thought of these chapters then. I asked the sacristan who this pious individual was. "*Un gran buon signore, ma assai infelice*" (a good man of old family, but very unhappy), he replied. There are things that even a novelist's curiosity has to respect, so I did not insist. Compared with that living prayer, the frescoes of Pinturicchio, the Renaissance tabernacle, seemed dead things to me and I do not remember them at all.

In my opinion, the most beautiful forms of prayer we have are the Lord's Prayer, the Canticle of the Sun, the *Laude* of St. Francis of Assisi and certain English hymns.

Christ taught us a very simple and dignified prayer, an immortal prayer, the one which gives the name of Father to the supreme Creator, thus uniting all Terrestrians fraternally without distinction of race, class or creed. We have not yet understood it, and I believe that it contains the whole mission of the prophet of Nazareth.

Out of the magnificent wave of the "Our Father" came "The Canticle of the Sun." This is still Christ's

dream, but strangely enlarged, as it takes in the whole of creation. Mankind thanks God "for his brother, the sun, for his sisters, the moon and the stars, for his brother, the wind, for the air and the clouds, for the clear sky, for his sister, the water, for his brother, the fire, and for his sister, material death." And this relationship, so profoundly real, with all beings and with all things, makes man greater, ennobles him and bears him along towards the Infinite. This adorable canticle, which, according to the Church, is too pantheistic, ought to be sung in chorus in all the temples of the earth and repeated every day by every thinking soul. It would be understood by the most primitive and the most cultivated mind alike. Universality is the great divine seal.

The "Laus Deo," which St. Francis wrote, after receiving the stigmatisation, is a hymn of pure adoration. It begins as follows: "Thou art holy, Lord God, thou art *God above all gods*, Thou art the sole author of miraculous works." This is, I believe, the only prayer in which man does not ask for anything!

English hymns are written for the masses. They are very manly and very human. They link their hope to that of the sacred poets, as in "The Lord is my Shepherd," and that hope always works powerfully.

Our prayers are the prayers of children and of beggars. We know nothing of the prayer of love. I shall scandalise many pious people, and many orthodox people, by affirming that all of us, just as we are, know nothing yet of the prayer of love. Mystics have an imaginary love for God, a kind of neurotic love. Ordinary mortals have a sort of forced love that is due

to suggestion. People dare deny the existence of God and they dare not say that *they do not love Him.* We have endeavoured to *conceive* what God is like before endeavouring to know Him and, in spite of the immense effort this has cost us, our conception is such a paltry one that it has only produced a wrong and fallacious sentiment. Why has Providence willed all this? By way of exercising our faculties, no doubt, and in order to give more splendour to the truth, as this is the real reason of error. I cannot find any other possible explanation.

God, whom we always see in the Beyond, does not seem real to us. We neither feel His presence nor His action. We cry out in our despair at the incontestable suffering there is to endure, but we do not notice how much God does to soften this for us. We are eloquent in our admiration of some work of art, and we do not say it is due to Him, that inspiration penetrated the soul of the artist just as the sun penetrates the bark and the thick pulp of the fruit. With the same thoughtlessness as the sparrows that I feed, we eat, for instance, the orange without noticing the genius by which its perfume and its taste have been preserved for us. Who has even thought, when peeling a banana, of admiring the warm weaving of its covering? How many persons, when squeezing a grape between their lips, say to themselves that this nectar of force — and of weakness — comes from a piece of ugly twisted wood? One day, in Normandy, when sitting outdoors on a bench at a farm there, I drank a bowl of cream. When I came to the last drop, I said aloud: "Ah, God, how well you

have made that. Thank you! It is your masterpiece." A young friend who was with me laughed outright.

"I never before heard grace at meals said in that way," she exclaimed.

"I say mine in that way now always," I replied. "I fancy it must be agreeable to some one and that it is better than a long prayer. It is more easy to admire a star than 'our daily bread.'"

As I rose, I happened to see a herd of cows grazing in a meadow near.

"There, you see," I continued, "the miracle of the cream is taking place over yonder. Man needs 'green meat' and, as he is not organised for grazing, Nature has created a living apparatus for cutting the grass, macerating and re-macerating it and transforming it into white milk, creamy and sweet."

"But the process makes the little calves into my foster-brothers," said my companion, smiling.

"Exactly, and the cows into our foster-mothers! The Hindus who put them among their sacred animals were profound thinkers."

"It really is wonderful," said the girl, with her eyes fixed on the good animal foster-mothers; "but after all," she continued, "miracles are no effort to God."

"No effort?" I repeated. "By considering God as a kind of magician, we lessen His greatness. Each creation, the blade of grass, like the star, represents an immensity of thought, of calculation and of effort. Have not the Earth and the Terrestrian been worked on now for millions of years?"

"That is so, but is it not a terrible thing that we have to forget what we have been taught and to make a fresh mentality for ourselves?"

"Do not forget anything," I said quickly, "for your impressions, like the darkness, are to serve for making you want light and then go in search of it."

This conversation came back to my mind as, the last few days, I have heard a great deal of conversation about re-education. Our psychological doctors have brought this word into vogue. Some of them are for the re-education of thought by the suggestion of simple reason, and others by hypnotic suggestion. They are all of them right and this is just the reason why they will never agree. This re-education is necessary for people who are quite well physically, just as it is necessary for invalids, for the sake of teaching them to look at Life. It has already commenced and is going on slowly, but surely, and among the people of humble rank. The day will come when religion, after it has evolved, together with science will create *the wave of admiration* and this alone will be able to produce the *prayer of love.* And this will truly be the elevation of the earthly soul towards the God of the Universe, and the phenomenon will then be complete.

CHAPTER XVI

THERE is certainly some one working with me, or, what is more probable, some one with whom I am working. After having studied Western Christianism, my mind next took up the social questions which it had, as it were, prepared. I was already feeling all the anguish and terror of a difficult chapter, when I was invited to luncheon at a hotel on the shore of the Lake, at which I had stayed many years ago. Whilst talking to my friend, I recalled the former table d'hôte, with its elegant guests, and some of the faces which had made an impression on me. Suddenly, I had an inward start, for just near to me were two of those faces, that of Count C——, a Milanese, and that of an American girl, Miss W——. Seated between them were two fine-looking little boys. Then, on that wonderful film, with which we are all provided, a scene which I should have thought obliterated, appeared once again.

One evening, seventeen years previously, as I was exchanging a few remarks with an acquaintance, just near the door of this same dining-room, I overheard a tall, dark young man say to the head waiter: "For Heaven's sake, Vittorio, do not put me by uncongenial people." This request from one Italian to another was the most natural thing in the world, and I heard Vittorio reply promptly: "*Monsieur le Comte* need not fear that." I noticed the keen, shrewd expression in the waiter's eyes as he glanced round the table, at which there were very few vacant places. His face then

lighted up, as though by some intuition. "Will Monsieur come here?" he said, and he showed his compatriot to a seat to the right of two American women, a mother and daughter. The latter had a charming face, hair and eyes of golden brown, a clear complexion and a pretty, fresh-looking mouth. The Italian's face expressed satisfaction. Vittorio evidently understood him, for his neighbours were not uncongenial. My seat was opposite Count C—— and I noticed that he passed the *menu*, the salt and the fruit to the two American women. On leaving the table after dinner, he bowed to them with that mixture of courtesy and intentional humility in which the Italian excels. The following day, at luncheon, conversation began between the Italian and his neighbours. It continued at dinner and, the day following, it was renewed on the verandah. Then the American women flew away. I say flew, as American women always seem to me like foreign birds perching here and there. Count C—— went away in his turn. The following year, in the month of May, I saw the announcement of his marriage with Miss W—— in the *New York Herald*. I had seen the prologue of it, and a friend had told me the chapters that had followed. At Rome, the young man had found his table neighbour again. He obtained a formal introduction to her, danced and flirted with her and, in spite of the keen opposition of the mother, he managed to marry both the girl and the handsome fortune which came to her from her father. The epilogue which I now had before me was embellished by these two scions, who appeared to be most happy.

As I recalled all this, I saw distinctly, just as though it were on a luminous screen, the waiter taking the young Milanese towards the girl who was to become his wife, the girl who was therefore destined for him. And this gesture of the head-waiter's, when he pointed to the vacant seat, had helped to bring about a marriage, to graft a human race, to give back to an old impoverished family its social rank and existence. Its action will go on being perpetuated, perhaps, through several generations. Was not Vittorio, the humble waiter, the collaborator of Providence in all this? He little guessed this himself, but Providence knew and we may be sure that its collaborators, all its collaborators, even those whom we consider as criminals, and even those who are chosen from a lower kingdom, must be precious and dear to Providence. This is not only because they are doing the work assigned to them, but because they are Providence's own creation. This stereotyped gesture of the waiter's used to get on my nerves, but at present my objective eye watches it with curiosity and interest. If it serves, sometimes, in bringing about some fine happiness, it also serves, by putting certain individuals into touch with each other, in bringing about some *fine* misery. Its mission in life is none the less remarkable on this account. Count C—— came back to this hotel, perhaps, out of a sort of gratitude, but I would wager that he has never given a thought to the man who was the agent of his fortune. Only an Italian would have been capable of understanding what would be congenial or uncongenial to another Italian, and Vittorio had been necessary for bringing together the Milanese

and the American girl. This fact certainly reveals providential, or I might say individual, thought, and such delicate, profound thought too. The humble, the most humble of all, are continually working out the destinies of the great; and the great are working out, in the same way, the destinies of the humble. This is the true equality, the only equality possible, as it satisfies all human dignity. It makes colleagues of us all, limbs of the same body; workmen not of man, but of God.

For a long time, a very long time, those who were employed at the hotel and who waited on me were to me so many black coats or white caps; a Francis replaced a John, a Louisa replaced a Mary and it seemed to me that it was always the same man or woman. Then, by some characteristic action, one or another of these individuals attracted my notice. To my mind, which had become objective, to my eye, which had been born again, they now began to appear as Life's servitors, as interesting specimens of the terrestrial soul. I discovered in them qualities that came straight from Nature, qualities which were neither due to education nor to conventionality. The whole class then won my sympathy and even my affection. In our touring epoch, this class has become an important factor and it deserves to be better known.

Those who are employed in hotels are superior to servants in private houses. They must have had a good elementary education. In their off-time, between luncheon and dinner, the foreign servants study French, write exercises and read the newspapers of their own

country. Many of the German and Italian hotel servants are musical, and the Germans and Italians are generally the best of the staff. It frequently happens that, from their sixth storey, we get strains from the violin, the mandoline or the guitar. The waiters need to be intelligent, to have a good memory, to be psychologists and to have a quick eye. All this is required of them and some of them are extraordinarily well qualified for their work. Certain waiters look in vain, for they never see when a knife, fork or glass is wanting. It is astounding that there are so many Terrestrians who, although they have a good pair of eyes, can never see. Waiters who serve meals in the private rooms need the skill of clowns for carrying the trays, laden with glass and china, to the different floors of the hotel. They often run with them, out of vanity. I can distinguish now, at once, those who will some day wear the black neck-tie of the head-waiter, or a manager's coat, and those who are doomed forever to the white neck-tie.

There are very few officials in important posts who would be capable of acting as the hall porter of a large hotel. This individual has to watch over the general security of the house. He must have a good memory for names and faces, receive the letters and parcels which arrive from all parts of the world, keep an account of money that is advanced, settle all difficulties between cabmen, chauffeurs and their customers, help travellers to get about, know by heart the railway time-tables and be almost a living Baedeker. No one could imagine all the information that is expected from this

unfortunate man. I am only surprised that people never ask him the way to Paradise.

The little grooms who are now, together with bakers' boys, the chief spectators of all street scenes in Paris, have a strangely demoralising sort of life in hotels. It is surprising that more of them do not turn out badly. Instead of exercising their faculties and their fingers as apprentices to some trade, they are planted in the hall of the hotel, employed in opening and closing doors and in going errands to the four quarters of the city. The "tip" becomes their sole object in life, and they have no other ambition than to see their purses swelling with pieces of silver money. When I look at them, fastened as it were to their stools, with their feet dangling, an inert expression on their young faces, or else absorbed in reading some wretched newspaper, and under the direct suggestion of thefts, crimes and suicides, I feel a kind of distress. It seems to me that they are not being protected as they ought to be. They never hear, for instance, a word of anything elevated in tone. No one helps to put them on the right road, or brings them back to it if they go astray. Their only home is a bed-room on the sixth floor, and on that terrible sixth floor they have the worst possible examples before them. If they are to come out morally and physically intact from the furnace into which they are flung, they must certainly be refractory to evil. They are all equal to emergencies and intelligent, most of them are very good-hearted boys. At Christmas time, they are to be seen in the post-offices sending off post-office orders to a grandfather, a grandmother, or even

to their foster-mother. A beam of honest pride lights up their boyish faces when they are doing this. Rich children receive and poor children give. Are the latter not greater than the former?

In Paris, the chamber-maids and valets in the hotels are nearly always French. They are frequently married and very fine couples they often are. I have frequently noticed the way in which the wife tries to lighten her husband's work, and I have been deeply touched by this. Their children are brought up by their old parents in their native village. They have to sacrifice the joy of being with these children and they are paying money for them all the time. They adore them all the more, probably, for that very reason.

The soul of the different nations to which all these hotel servants belong can be felt in their service. That of the Northern German and of the Swiss is rough and surly but kindly; that of the Southern German is more gentle and refined. The soul of the Italian is very complex, passionate, shrewd and instinctively courteous; that of the Austrian pleasant and gay; that of the Scandinavian timid, proud and very sentimental; that of the English apparently cold, somewhat distant, but correct and dignified. That of the French gives me a sensation of clearness, quick intelligence and frankness.

Some of those employed in the hotels belong to good families. Among the Austrians and Scandinavians there are some very fine-looking, strapping young men. They are very clean, well and carefully dressed and would pass for the scions of Grand Dukes or Archdukes.

Foreigners only see, of course, the best side of these

Terrestrians of various nationalities, but under the surface of this best side there is a constant bubbling up of jealousy, envy and a crowd of ugly instincts. The manager has to be very firm, skilful and just, if he is to obtain peace among them and the discipline necessary for the comfort of his guests. When people of the humbler class are not in service, they are very fraternal and they help each other and come to each other's relief with admirable generosity. Directly they find themselves together under a master, they become enemies. There is nothing surprising in this, for one must be fairly high up in the psychological scale to be able to bear the brunt of rivalry well.

Those employed in hotels are generally badly lodged. They have to sleep in very small rooms, just under the roof, rooms that are extremely warm in summer and extremely cold in winter.

Now-a-days, inspectors come round from time to time. They must simply content themselves with seeing that there is insufficient air and space, for it does not seem to me that any difference is made after their visits. The employés are frequently ill-fed. In Germany, they have the right of bringing an action against the avaricious employer, but they lose their situations afterwards and they cannot all afford this. It is simply slavery still, and the slavery of the free man is the hardest kind of any.

I was glad to see the introduction of the law for a day of rest every week. It is a tiresome law for the hotel proprietors, and a disagreeable one for those staying in the hotels, as it means strange servants once a

week. For a few among those employed, this day of rest gives them an opportunity of spending their money foolishly and of ruining their health, but for the majority it is an excellent thing. They all feel the need of this rest, for they get up late on this day, which is a luxury their predecessors never knew. The Swiss and Germans generally go for long country walks, they treat themselves to the cinematograph, go to the picture galleries or to hear some music. Their cerebral cellules receive thousands of fresh impressions, and this, no doubt, advances their progress. It seems as though the gods want to accelerate everything at present. The French married servants go to see their children, their parents or their friends. Those who have a room somewhere like going to spend the day there together. The coffee they make and the meals that they cook there seem delicious to them and they feel a special kind of joy in being *at home.* The following day they return to the hotel, looking rested and more ready to put forth their energy in their daily work. When humanity knows its own body and soul better and the play of the repercussions it undergoes, it will make the best use of the forces of each one for the benefit of all, and it is only then that we shall have learnt how to love one another. To love is nothing, but to know how to love is everything!

Those employed in hotels give us a fine example of what the right sort of mutuality can do. They have founded a Society which gives them all help and protection. It procures situations for its members, allows them an indemnity of three francs a day in case of

illness, during the first three months, and one franc fifty during the following three months. It also gives them a pension of two hundred and fifty francs a year, later on. It pays the funeral expenses of its members and helps the widows and orphans. Formerly when a hotel waiter died, he was buried in a pauper's grave and his relatives could never find any trace of him. At present, the family is informed, a temporary allotment is bought in the cemetery, his grave is marked round and a wreath is laid on it. All this is done with subscriptions of two francs fifty a month, the profits of an annual ball and the interest of the capital which the Society possesses, for, thanks to its good organisation, gifts and legacies, it is now rich. It has prospered like this, chiefly because it is due to private initiative. The day when it has the unfortunate idea of getting itself recognised by the State, and it is sure to have this idea, the interest of its capital will increase, but its capital will decrease.

The hotel staff is very badly paid and the tip is its real profit. Many travellers, more particularly the wealthy ones, protest against this indirect taxation. They are right, in the sense that service is supposed to be included in the hotel prices. They are wrong, inasmuch as the hundreds of little special attentions which they get are well worth, not a *pourboire* but a gratification. The *pourboire* is humiliating, as it is in a way obligatory, but a gratification is a free thing, and it honours the person who gives it and the one who receives it. There are a quantity of words which, like this one, ought to be changed in our times. A wealthy

American business man said to me one day: "I consider that the money I spend in *pourboires* is the money that brings me back the most." His practical mind had discovered that. There is an innate pride among the humbler classes which makes them want to recognise what one does for them. They are never behindhand with us, and what they give us back is always more than we gave them. I have often noticed the special care with which porters handle the trunks and bags of those who have treated them justly. Generally, and this is not a very agreeable thing to have to own, women are not as generous as men. Foreign women, for instance, who are visiting Paris, buy more than they had intended to buy. When they have used their letter of credit up and are going away, they will economise on the tips. I knew a Sicilian woman of good social position. She was not wealthy and, on arriving at the hotel, she used to put aside the money she should need for the servants, so that her purchases should not oblige her to restrict her generosity. That was a true sentiment of justice. Money alone is not sufficient for winning the esteem and respect of the humble. They feel, by intuition, which persons are interested in them and they are grateful for this interest. Unfortunately, I cannot distribute gratifications to those who wait on me, as though I were a millionaire, and yet I have always been waited on as though I were a millionaire.

In a hotel where I stayed for a long time, one of the porters was a veritable human masterpiece, a comic masterpiece. He was a natural clown. He had a shock of hair, jerky movements and the bewildered expression

of that amusing type of individual. He had the same way of rushing at things, but with the difference that he did not only *appear* to be at work, for the work he was doing seemed to slip through his powerful hands ready done. Besides all this, he was a born humorist. As a matter of fact, he had a fortune in his roughly built figure. His fellow servants saw what his true vocation was and they all called him "Chocolat," after that negro clown of the *Nouveau Cirque*, who was the joy of Parisian children. He had been brought up, after the death of his father and mother, by a Beauce farmer. He had first had charge of the turkeys and then of the sheep. The bewilderment of this herdsman, on arriving in a first-class Parisian hotel, can be imagined. He was at once a living target for all the would-be jokers, but his quick, droll replies and his heavy fists soon won for him a certain respect, and Gustave-Chocolat became an important person on the hotel staff.

One morning, on my way downstairs, I heard the hotel proprietor blaming him severely for work that had been badly done. Holding his duster in his hand, he watched her move away when she had finished speaking. He then turned to a chamber-maid, who happened to be there, and, pointing to their mistress with a movement of his chin, he remarked slily: "What is the matter with her? If she isn't satisfied, let her leave! I'm all right here, and I'm going to stop!" He thereupon began to polish the balustrade. His utter buffoonery made me laugh till the tears came. A few days later, from the bathroom, I heard him talking as he was sweeping the landing energetically. "Rich people! I'm

sorry for them!" he remarked; "they are always in bed. I have to swallow their microbes and they are the ones to be ill!" With a little culture, he would, perhaps, have been a great humorist. I used to like getting him to talk. Behind his headstrong forehead, all barred as it was with those wrinkles of childhood caused by early suffering, I discovered the most unexpected capabilities and, among others, a special gift for understanding everything mechanical. Whilst minding his sheep he had studied the working of an old watch, his sole inheritance, and he had succeeded in understanding it. He used to say, proudly: "If a watch does not go, I know what is the matter with it, and, if only I had the necessary tools, I could soon mend it!" His love of clock-work had been fatal to some of the hotel clocks and to the alarums of his fellow-servants. I also discovered that he had an innate love of "patriotic" novels. He bought as many as he could and he used to devour them when on night duty. He told me that, on account of his short stature, he had not been accepted for military service.

"Why should they care a straw about my height?" he added, polishing up my window furiously. "There are plenty of chicken-hearted chaps of six foot. I could give a jacketing to any one." He then tossed his head in his clown-like way and remarked: "They'll perhaps be glad to get me some day!"

Our poor Chocolat confided in me, and several times I could see the grudge he bore those who blamed him unjustly.

"They're stupid, the *bosses!*" he remarked. "They

take all the use out of your arms and legs with their *jawing*. A few pleasant words give you courage. They are oats that don't cost much!"

Our concierge knew how interested I was in this man and one day he told me that, on opening the big gates, that morning, Chocolat had seen a poor, half-dressed individual stamping his feet to get warm under the arcades. He promptly gave him a few coppers and told him to wait. He then rushed up to his room on the sixth floor, brought down a flannel shirt and insisted on the other putting it on there and then. I could quite well imagine the rough way in which he had given his orders. I was very much touched and, with my damnable curiosity, I wanted to know what had been in Chocolat's mind at the time and what sentiments he had obeyed. After luncheon, I went up to my room rather earlier than was my custom and found him kneeling, in front of the grate, polishing the fender. I congratulated him on his kindly deed of that morning. He turned very red and shrugged his left shoulder, as though in excuse.

"Yes," he said, "but folks have no right to upset you by showing their *hide* like that in January, especially when there are shops near like the one by us!"

The shop by us was that of a noted shirt-maker! Oh, Chocolat, what humour and humour of the best kind! He then continued in a surly tone, and with a curious expression of bitterness:

"I'd got three flannel shirts and that chap hadn't one! Is that just and is it common sense? There's folks that say we are all brothers, but they don't think

so at all. All that's the flummery of priests, members of Parliament and socialists, so that they shall get a leg up. When they've climbed on to the wall, though, they don't know you any longer, they're not even cousins then. It's only simpletons that get taken in by them. They don't catch this bird with that chaff. Brothers! Oh, yes!" continued Gustave, with his amusing jerk of the head, "if I went and told the good lady here that I was her brother and that she was my sister, wouldn't she swing me round!"

I promptly imagined the scene that such a declaration would cause, and I had the greatest difficulty to maintain my gravity. "All the same our fraternity is very real," I observed, "for we are all the creatures of the same Creator, the children of God. Those who reflect at all, or who are very good, feel this perfectly well. Did you not tell me that the sight of this poor vagabond, without a shirt to his back, *upset* you this morning?"

"Yes, it did, it made my teeth chatter."

"You see, if you had not been brothers, of the same flesh, his nakedness would not have troubled you."

"P'r'aps not."

"You could not eat your dinner side by side with a fellow-creature whom you knew to be starving, could you?"

"Oh, no, but there are plenty of folks that the world leaves to die of starvation."

"It does not know of their poverty, no doubt, for mutual aid is not well organised."

"If all men are brothers, why do they eat each

other's noses off, why do they rob and kill each other?"

"Because they were created, for the sake of the struggle, all of them different from each other. Some of them are intelligent, others stupid; some of them are good, others bad; some are born to command, others to obey; and all this makes enemies of brothers."

"And is that just?"

"I think it is, because 'it requires all sorts of people to make the world,' as the saying is. Then, too, we are all necessary, the most humble as well as the greatest."

"Even those that are good for nothing?" asked Gustave, looking me full in the face, with a mocking, aggressive expression in his eyes.

"But, my good fellow, there is not a single creature who does nothing. The infirm and even those who are really ill are all doing something. In order to get some one else to act, we have to do something ourselves. One movement brings about another movement. A mechanician like you must understand that."

"Yes, I understand, but all the same there must be something wrong somewhere, for there's too much wretched poverty and Madame does not know p'r'aps —"

"I know, oh, yes, I know," I interrupted quickly. "There are too many things that are wrong in the world, but, with God's help, they are gradually being set right. He is at work, Himself, in bringing about our perfection. In the meantime, you can console yourself with the thought that suffering and death will come to all of us. And I am not sure that the humbler class does not get the better part or, at any rate, the easier

part in this life. The workman has only the worry of earning the daily bread. His master has the responsibility of meeting all his engagements, and if he cannot do this, he is dishonoured. You hear nothing of the sufferings of the rich, and they are sometimes so great that money is of no use. There are more suicides among rich people than among the poor. Emperors, Kings, Presidents, and those at the head of things generally, have longer and more arduous days than you do. Those to whom you listen never tell you all this, as they want to turn your head in the wrong direction. In the night refuges, the slumberers snore, and in many soft beds, slumber never comes. You have seen many American millionaires in this hotel. Do they seem to you much happier than you are yourself?"

"Lord, no! They don't seem to be having much of a spree. I've noticed that."

"They have troubles and maladies that you will never know. Ah, you may be sure that God's scales are equally balanced. . . ."

"Some of my chums say that there is no God. I ask them whether it's men that made the sun, the moon and the stars? No, that was God, it's as clear as daylight."

"Yes, God is the great clock-maker. We cannot understand the movement of our Earth; it is combined with the movements of millions of stars and they all have to keep time together."

"Yes, that's quite possible," assented our "Chocolat," in a knowing way. "Does Madame believe that there will be another world, as the priests tell us?"

"Certainly I do and you will be a great mechanician there, perhaps," I answered.

"With plenty of tools?"

"With all the tools you need."

"That would be proper! I was afraid that we should just twirl our thumbs when we were once in Paradise."

"Oh, no, we shall go on working, as we must always be learning something."

"Oh, well, that will suit me," observed the good fellow, getting up.

"And in the meantime, your polishing has made my room look more cheerful," I remarked; "my fender shines like gold."

"Yes, it looks very well," agreed Chocolat, giving it a final rub with his white apron.

Although this conversation took place more than ten years ago, I have been able to write it down exactly. It had remained in my memory, as it was very characteristic and was to *serve*, when I needed it.

Strangely enough, Chocolat's first love-affair was a farce, and I cannot resist telling about it. On arriving from his native Beauce, which, according to him, was the most beautiful province of France, he had some very dirty habits of primitive coarseness. It was not long, though, before he began to feel the influence of his more civilised surroundings. Cleanliness must have been quite a revelation to him, I am sure. In a very short time, he looked like another man. When his rough work was done, he would wash and I expect he *curry-combed* himself very energetically. He would then comb his thick, stubbly hair, change his clothes and put on clean linen.

Feeling considerably improved in appearance after this free use of soap and water, he would then stand on the doorstep, stroking and twirling his budding moustache and taking in a quantity of instantaneous photographs with his little, keen eyes. He was not long in discovering one of the prettiest housemaids in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately for himself, he expressed his admiration aloud, and this gave his fellow-servants the idea of playing a good joke on him. One of them told him that the girl had noticed him and that she liked his looks. He took this seriously, as he was extremely vain, and he now began to strut about finely. He received letters, written in very friendly terms, and very soon the most loving epistles signed Louise. She told her admirer that he must neither speak to her, nor look at her, when she was walking under the arcades, as it would not do for her to be compromised by him. These wretched practical jokers carried out their plan so well that the poor fellow was soon wildly in love. He paid more and more attention to his toilette, bought startling neckties and used scented soap. When he was joked about all this, he would reply, with his comic wink and a conceited smile: "Young men will be young men!" Finally, the pseudo-Louise appointed a meeting, under the arches of the Madeleine Church, between twelve and one in the afternoon. At the appointed time, which was his luncheon hour, he was there, looking very spick and span, awaiting his beloved. Alas, she never came. I expect he was cruelly disappointed. That evening, his tormentors sent him a note to comfort him, in which another meeting was arranged. This comedy was kept

up for a fortnight. And the victim lost his appetite completely. Finally, some one told the maid in question of the liberty that was being taken with her name. She was indignant, but at the same time flattered by the sentiment she had inspired. She at once wrote to her admirer, in order to undeceive him. Chocolat told me about the abominable trick that had been played on him and gave me this letter to read. I copied it and kept it as a document of human kindness and delicacy. It ran thus:

"MONSIEUR GUSTAVE,

"I have never sent you a letter of any kind. A trick has been played upon you, but I have had nothing to do with it. I am going to be married to a young man near my own home, so that my heart is no longer free. If this were not so, I should have liked you as you are so upright and straightforward. There is nothing left but to despise those who tried to make fun of you in such a stupid way. They are imbeciles and good-for-nothings.

"LOUISE."

"Madame has read it?" said *Monsieur Gustave*, when I returned him the letter. "If she had been free, she would have liked me and she says that those who imagined this take-in are imbeciles and good-for-nothings. . . . Imbeciles," he repeated, in delight, tapping the sheet of paper with the back of his hand; "that's written there."

I admired the feminine intuition of this humble girl. She had found the words that were needed for healing the wounded love and self-respect of her adorer and, at the same time, she had given him a weapon for her own revenge. Without this letter, Chocolat would probably have used his fists on his tormentors and, as it was, he contented himself with showing the letter to every one of them.

During the summer season, Gustave gave notice and left the hotel, "in order to go and see the world," as he said himself. On my return for the winter, he was no longer there and I was very sorry. I never saw him again but, on Shrove Tuesday of two consecutive years we had a most persistent horn player under the arcades of the Rue de Castiglione. It was no other than our ex-porter giving us this serenade. How and where could he have learned to play the hunting-horn? This fresh talent would have made of him an accomplished clown.

And so I had to go to Vevey in search of this chapter! Such as it is, it has given me great pleasure to write it and it seems to me that I have paid a debt.

When we first begin to think of it, we are surprised that Christianism should not have developed the sentiment of human fraternity more than it has done, but when we look at its work more closely, we see that this has never been *real* for Christians. It is of no use protesting, as this is quite true. It preached human fraternity after the manner of Balaam's ass. It disdained Nature, it ignored everything in the divine book,

in which fraternity is written in living letters. Christ had seen it in his long meditations and, by the words "Our Father," he wanted to reveal it to the world, but the world was not ready to hear it. For the apostles and their successors, it was only an ideal, a mystical dream, and we ought to be grateful to them for having dreamed and lived it until it could be better understood.

Charity of old, both with Pagans and Christians, exalted those who gave it, but humiliated and dishonoured those who received it. It was an instrument of power, of tyranny even, a means of arriving, of winning terrestrial and celestial honours. The sentiment of our fraternity will not come from Christian pulpits, but from Science, from the chemical laboratories, from Natural History, from Philosophy. It will be one of the fruits of the evolution which has commenced. And then, when we have become aware of our near relationship, the mutuality which will protect the workman from need, which will confer true liberty on him, the arbitrage which is to help him, will be organised to every one's satisfaction. The uprooted, the vanquished ones of Life will then be able to accept the help of the community without any shame, and those individuals who are really good, and really humane, will spare the feet that walk for them and the hands that serve them.

In order to rise, the aeroplane has to run along the ground for yards and yards. For millions of years, humanity has been running along level with the earth, in order to rise and to start in the direction of justice and of love. Fraternity alone can help it to get there.

We are always told to "Look above." I would say, "Look down below, deeper and ever deeper down, for the secrets of God, like all precious things, must be buried very deep down."

CHAPTER XVII

THE Autumn sunsets on this part of Leman, which is known as the Large Lake, have a special beauty of their own. Yesterday's sunset made an impression on me which I hope will not be effaced for a long time. Against a remarkably clear sky, the outlines of the peaked or rounded summits of the Alps were very distinct. The chain, with its marquetry of snow, was of such a pure blue that it looked like solidified azure. And over this whiteness and over this azure, the light of the setting sun threw its rays with an art that was truly divine. It then created a golden background, upon which Venus appeared with its diamond-like brilliancy. A few minutes later Mars was visible in the east, as red as a ruby. Between these two living jewels, the faint crescent of a new moon stood out against the sky. The three stars remained alone in the twilight silence. "The honeymoon of Venus and Mars," I said to myself irreverently. A second glance gave me a kind of religious emotion. I can never look long at the starry firmament. Its unfathomable immensity and its mystery make a thrill of awe run down my back, atom as I am. A few minutes later, I took my place at my writing-table again and my eyes, still filled with the grandeur of the world above, fell on the little globe which was on my table. The Earth! It seems incredible, but for the first time in my life, it occurred to me that not only was it a planet like those that were shin-

ing in front of me, but that its route was traced between these two, that it appeared every evening, like them, above some horizon, and that every evening it put a golden nail in the firmament. I had learnt this fact and it seems to me that I had always known it, but I had never really conceived this before. To conceive a thing means that something fresh is formed within us and, according to the thing conceived, the sensation is exquisite or painful. I saw the Terrestrians, feet against feet, kept in equilibrium thus on the surface of a solid globe which keeps turning round on itself, in the fluid, transparent ether, at the rate of 1600 an hour. I saw myself in the cage where I do not sing, alas, but where I think, and I saw myself with all my little exercise books rolling among the stars. This amusing vision seemed to me grandly comic. Then I turned my little globe slowly round. Was this then how man imagined the planet to be on which he had grown? A sphere, just a little flat towards the poles, swelling out at its equator, on which longitudinal and horizontal lines are traced, imaginary lines which serve us as land marks. The pale green background indicates the liquid part, the Ocean. The solid part, or the Earth, is cut up strangely and very irregularly, ending in points at unequal distances. It then begins again forming veritable strings of islands. This solid part is divided into numberless pieces, outlined with red, yellow, mauve and green. Each of these pieces bears the name of the nation to whom it belongs. An infinite number of lines seems to bind these various countries together. Some of these lines indicate the net-work of railroads

and others the various routes of the boats, and still others those of the cables which transmit invisible human thought. Then the arrows, scattered in every direction, mark the currents of the atmosphere and of the Ocean.

And this is how, after millions of years of existence, and of perpetual efforts, mankind has come to know and to see his place of habitation. He has made out the lines of the mountain chains, of the flow of rivers and the outlines that the sea has formed. This is very much and it is nothing. It is much, because, in the immensity of his domain, he can no longer get lost. It is nothing, because he only knows the surface or the body, as it were, of the Earth. He knows nothing of its soul, of that soul which aliments his own, and with which he is ever collaborating. He knows almost nothing of the immaterial forces which he is obeying, of the psychical zones in the midst of which he is moving, of the currents transmitted to him by the orders of the gods, of the fluid ideas, pictures, sentiments, which unite him to other beings and which make his destiny. Oh, how much there is that the Terrestrian does not yet know!

With a finger that seemed to see, I once more turned my little globe round. It appeared to me all at once like a chess-board with many coloured squares. And is our planet not that? Yes, it is in truth a chess-board, on which the gods are playing the eternal game of Life. They are playing this game with man, and for man, on the chess-board which they made very slowly, which they have altered during long centuries

and which they will alter again up to the last; a chessboard on which every square contains a world of wonders, and of which every square is a battle-field. I know too little history to be able to follow the terrifying game closely, but I know enough to enable me to grasp what the aim and object of it all is, and this aim and object is nothing but the evolution and progress of mankind. We must have the courage to write that this evolution commenced, and has continued, by means of robbery and murder. Was it for the sake of a handful of lentils, an apple, or a woman that the far-off ancestor was guilty of fratricide? That matters little. He killed his brother and that gesture of doing away with the weaker one has been repeated through the ages, with the implacability of a primordial and necessary law. It goes on repeating itself. In our twentieth century, people still rob each other, but in a more artistic way. People are always massacring each other in some part of the globe, but in a more scientific manner than formerly. The result is the same, though. Thanks to the inspiration of the gods, we have manufactured the most wonderful engines of warfare. One of these days, they will want to see how these things work and we know what that means. If we are not to be staggered by this terrifying reality, we must be able to listen to what Nature cries out to us with all her voices. She tells us that she is a great transformer and that her work is Life's work. In that immortal struggle to which humanity seems to be doomed, material forces only serve psychical forces. In reality, the real combat is between passions, sentiments and ideas;

between those formidable Invisibles lodged in certain cellules of our brain, for which other cellules have to furnish the weapons of attack and defence. From the flint hatchet to the elegant and well-tempered sword of the Fronde and to the Lebel gun; from the wretched little boat to the Dreadnought, there is a ladder which will serve for the history of our mentality. And on this terrestrial chess-board, the gods have moved pawns, knights, kings, queens, castles and bishops about and have pushed them backwards and forwards in a thousand strange and incomprehensible ways. Each of these moves has produced frightful hecatombs and waves and waves of human and animal suffering. Each of these moves has caused the destruction of the Terrestrians' dwellings, temples and edifices, built at the cost of enormous labour. Each of these moves, too, has caused the dispersion of treasures which had taken ages to collect. Whilst war and disease raged on certain of the squares, new life was born and developed on others. The gods put light here and shade there and then they made shade of light and light of shade. In far-off times, India, China, Persia and Asia shone with a brilliancy that has never been surpassed. Egypt, Greece, Carthage, Rome have all been beacons in their turn. It was, although they did not know it, in order to win for themselves this divine light that the nations were all moving onwards. I fancy I see the endless files of warriors, accompanied by women, children, slaves and flocks, crossing the mountain chains, the rivers, marshes, deserts, with just what belonged to them, and with none of the material forces to help them

that we have in our times. When I think of the weak who must have fallen on the way, of the conquered who have been killed, mutilated or taken into captivity, my heart swells with pity and with anger. Are the Powers who govern us cruel then? No. They are, no doubt, obeying higher and inevitable laws themselves, and their progress means ours too. And this progress is immense, in spite of what those people say who have eyes which do not see. In the first centuries of our era, the ancestors of the Germans of to-day, were handsome barbarians who dyed their bodies blue. There were cannibals in Scotland, whilst in the forests of France, human blood flowed in sacrifice on the stone altars. At present, Europe and America possess the light. Will it return to the East? It is quite possible, for there are glimmers of dawn there.

All these thoughts had made my little globe seem very living to me, in the most curious way, and I turned it gently round. Poor Earth! We do not love it as we should, as we only know vaguely the history of its titanic epopee. When will some one come who will know how to read it objectively, as a "Divine manuscript," and who will be able to explain it to us clearly and simply, so that both the humble and the great may be interested in it? There is no science so little understood and so stupidly taught as history — our history. We compel brains of ten years old, milky brains, as it were, to absorb the past grandeur of Egypt, of a country which they cannot imagine and cannot even place. We compel them to remember the barbarous names of its kings and dynasties, at an age when they cannot

even understand what a dynasty is. Geography is taught to them from a flat map, and they do not even see the real shape of our planet. In France, the children of the elementary schools begin their history with the third Republic. There was nothing before this, it appears, and there can be nothing after it. At the Nanterre school examinations, last summer, some little girls of fourteen were questioned on the history of universal suffrage! The miracle is that, out of twelve, two knew something about it. They were the daughters of Republicans evidently. And people are surprised at our depopulation. We are taught history when we are unable to understand it, and when we could understand, we do not open our books again, thanks to our former dislike of it. Our ignorance prevents us from judging either the past or the present in a sound manner. We content ourselves with knowing the names of the great victors and of the celebrated vanquished ones, but we do not even see that their victories and their defeats still affect us. If my globe now tells me something immense and wonderful, it is thanks to some reading I have done, reading which has had its influence on this volume, and which, in spite of my will, was to guide my barque, "The Why," once more towards Rome. "All roads lead to Rome" is the saying, and all far-reaching thought leads there too.

Among the phenomena which go to make up our existences, there is one which always astonishes me. For months and years, we may look at a name, an object or a person without really seeing them. There then comes a moment when we are struck by this name,

this object or this person. They enter into our life and play a more or less important part there. This is no hap-hazard, no fatality, but a Providential contact. There is a certain *Hôtel Gibbon* in Lausanne, named thus in memory of the great English writer who was one of the guests of the old city. I saw this name nearly every day and, to me, it meant nothing but the hotel sign. One afternoon, it suddenly occurred to me that Gibbon was the author of "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and that reminded me of a characteristic feature of an epoch that had been lived. In 1869, soon after arriving in Rome, I had asked for this work at a bookshop on the Corso. I was told by the bookseller, in a loud voice, for the edification of all present, I suppose, that it was on the Index of Prohibited Books, and that he had no copies of it. Whilst I was looking at the titles of books on the shelves, one of the salesmen came up to me and told me he had just discovered a copy of the work for which I had asked and that, as I was a foreigner, he could let me have it. He then asked me so exorbitant a price for it that I did not buy it. In those days a sin was expensive in Rome, at present it costs nothing. I had thought no more either of Gibbon or his history and now, after so many years, I had a wish to read it, a spontaneous wish that was like an inspiration.

I read this history and it took me a whole year. It is written in a simple, pleasant style and is full of light. I have already confessed my frivolity. It is such that I cannot continue reading a dry, serious writer, who has neither warmth nor colour, even though he could

tell me the secrets I am curious to know. I did not skip one of the three thousand pages which are the synthesis of fifteen centuries. This synthesis is so clear that it shows up, all the time, Providential work, without ever entangling the various threads of the weaving. And I admired, as a novelist, the linking together of the various circumstances, the art with which everything is made to concur, the apparent insignificance of the causes, the immensity of the effects and the intentional ironies. But, as I read this drama, lived by us in mind and body, this drama which has engendered so much suffering, I was frequently rebellious and the exclamations to which I gave vent were not precisely in admiration of the gods. From time to time I thought I was coming to the death of things and then I felt other organisms coming to life. When I read about the kingdom of England, for instance, and then about the kingdom of France, and the other European kingdoms, I found myself face to face with evolution, with the phenomenon of eternal life, and my confidence and hope came back to me.

On reading the "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" I wondered, in bewilderment, to what Gibbon owed the honour of having his work on the Index of Prohibited Books? It was, perhaps, thanks to the crime of having told the truth, the truth which is not pleasant to know. His philosophy, as a scholar and a gentleman, seems to hover above all questions of party and of religion. When he has to tell something which is not favourable to Christianism or to the Church, he does this with evident regret and he gives us his

proofs from the doctors of the same Church, and never from its enemies. Some people consider this very adroit. I think it was straightforward. I fancy that those who condemned his work canonically were alarmed at the three thousand pages and did not read it through — or they were incapable of understanding it.

After Gibbon, I always used to read my *New York Herald* from Paris. When, in the political and social notes of twentieth century Rome, I saw accounts of a Parliamentary meeting, or of dinners and balls, at the Grand Hotel and at the Excelsior, in which names reappeared that were still shining out in my mind, as those of the feudal barons, names such as Colonna, Orsini or Caetani, I experienced the sensation of taking a refreshing bath on coming out of a furnace. And the childish, frivolous wish came wickedly into my mind that I might see modern Romans moving about among the great scenes which my reading had made so real that they seemed to be incredibly near to me. Three years previously, I had gone back to Italy after a quarter of a century's absence. My voyage had caused me a whole series of disappointments, for which I should formerly have held Rome, Florence and Venice responsible, but which were merely subjective disappointments. Men whom I had known there at the age of twenty-five were now fifty, and when I saw them with their hair turning grey, it gave me a stab. The whole of the time I was there, I felt my own age and the sensation was abominable, yes, absolutely abominable. I felt that Italy had become too strong an accumulator for me; just as I feel that Paris is too rapid.

The beauty contained in the Museums attracted "the Other One" irresistibly. I was consequently obliged to mount an endless number of stairs when "I myself" was protesting all the time. It was humiliating to be obliged to ask the care-takers for permission to keep my sunshade as I walked through the rooms, and it was only the sight of certain masterpieces that calmed me again. One day in Rome, I was talking to one of my friends, near her window, when my eyes fell on a mask on a house opposite. Its powerful expression struck me and interrupted what I was saying. I apologised and added with some annoyance: "It is most tiresome that one can never talk in peace here. One is always interrupted by something extraordinary!" This was not a mere whim. I really felt as though I were being pursued by beauty and it gave me a sort of tired anger.

I had, as I believed, bidden a last farewell to Italy and, without my being aware of it, the book I had written, the reading of Gibbon, and every chapter of "The Wonderful Romance" was taking me unavoidably back there. Once more the gods are saying to me: "Start off, start off, poor Terrestrian with the tired feet!" Do they know how much it costs me only to draw out the staples of my tent, to leave my light, cheerful room and that table of harmony, Lake Leman, to leave the sparrows, the wrens and the tomtits which make of my balcony an open aviary? Do they know it? I fancy they do, for their will comes to me through some very dear American friends who beg me to spend Christmas with them in Rome. They write the word

"Come" in enormous letters. That written word has made a curious impression on me. I will go, yes, I will go, come what may! It is perhaps foolish. I am three years older; that means something like nine campaigns, for at my age each year counts triple. Is it not rather late in the day to make another pilgrimage to the Eternal City? I feel how thin the thread of my life now is. It seems to me, at times, as though I hear the jeering of Destiny's sinister handmaiden, for she it is who will cut the thread,— oh, the horrible creature! She no doubt considers that she has been very kind in delaying so long a time, but it is hard to leave Life now when I see it so immense, beautiful with an immortal beauty! Courage will come to me. If it be at Rome that I am to succumb, there is one of the most beautiful cemeteries in the world at the foot of the Aventine, the foreigners' cemetery, the one of which Shelley said: "It makes one in love with death." The light, softened by the tall cypress trees, is extraordinary; it seems to have been created for happy disembodied souls, and those who are at rest there seem to belong to the same world, to be happy together. Am I destined to sleep in such peace? *Chi lo sa!*

Well, I am going to prepare for my departure, as though it were to be the final journey. I shall finish off here all that I have read through of the "Wonderful Romance," so that it may not be wasted. I should like to be able to take it on to Rome. If this should not be allowed me, I shall not have said all that I wanted to say, but I shall have said all that I was to say. Others who know more and are more capable will

continue this reading. I shall have had the glory of having commenced it. That is enough for me. The volume will be a small one in the book-shop; if to some of my readers it should appear great, that, too, is enough for me.

PIERRE DE COULEVAIN.

LAUSANNE, Hôtel Beauséjour.

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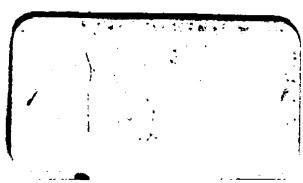
She did not go to Rome. She "fell from the Branch" a few steps away from the spot where Edward Gibbon finished "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," *his share of* "The Wonderful Romance." *Her express wish was to remain unknown. As she repeated frequently, her work alone belongs to criticism and to curiosity.*

THE END